

THE
PLEASANTNESS
OF A
Religious LIFE,
OPEN'D and PROV'D;
AND
RECOMMENDED to the
Consideration of ALL,
Particularly of
YOUNG PEOPLE.

By the late Reverend
Mr. *MATTHEW HENRY*,
Minister of the Gospel.

The SECOND EDITION.

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To the READER.



***T**HAT Distinction which the learned Dr. Henry More insists so much upon, in his Explanation of the Grand Mystery of Godliness, between the Animal Life and the Divine Life, is certainly of great use to lead us into the Understanding of that Mystery. What was the Fall and Apostacy of Man, and what is still his Sin and Misery, but the Soul's Revolt from the Divine Life, and giving up itself wholly to the Animal Life? And what was the Design of our Redeemer, but to recover us to the Divine and Spiritual Life again by the Influences of his Grace? And to this his Gospel has a direct Tendency; His Religion is all Spiritual and Divine, while all other Religions savour of the Animal Life. Christianity (saith he) is that Period of the Wisdom and Providence of God, wherein the Animal Life is remarkably insulted, and triumphed over by the Divine. Book 2. Chap. 7. And so far, and no further, are we Christians indeed, as this Revolution is brought about in our Souls.*

The Conflict is between these two: Nothing draws more forcibly than Pleasure: In order, therefore, to the Advancing of the Interests of the Divine Life in myself and others, I have here endeavour'd, as God has enabled me, to make it evident, that the
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TO the READER.

Pleasures of the Divine Life are unspeakably better, and more deserving than those of the Animal Life: Were People convinced of this, we should gain our Point.

The Substance of this was preach'd last Year in Six Sermons, in the ordinary Course of my Ministry, among many other Reasons why we should be Religious; I was then solicited to make it Publick, and now take this Opportunity to prepare it for the Press, when, through the good Hand of my God upon me, I have finish'd my Fifth Volume of Expositions, before I go about the Sixth. And herein, I confess, I indulge an Inclination of my own; for this Doctrine of the Pleasantness of Religion is what I have long had a particular Kindness for, and taken all Occasions to mention. Yet I would not thus far have gratify'd either my Friends Request, or my own Inclination, if I had not thought, that by the Blessing of God, it might be of some Service to the Common Interest of Christ's Kingdom, and the Common Salvation of Precious Souls.

May 31.
1714.

M. H.

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P R O V. III. 17.

*Her Ways are Ways of Pleasantness,
and all her Paths are Peace.*



T RUE Religion and Godliness is often in Scripture, and particularly in this Book of the Proverbs, represented, and so recommended to us under the Name and Character of *Wisdom*; Prov. I. 2, 7, 20. II. 2, 10. III. 13.

Psal. III. 15. because it is the highest Improvement of the *Human Nature*, and the best and surest Guide of *Human Life*. It was one of the first, and most ancient Discoveries of God's Mind to the Children of Men, to the *Inquisitive* Part or them that are in Search for *Wisdom*, and would have it at any Rate; then when God made a *Weight* for the Winds, and a *Decree* for the Rain, when he brought all the other Creatures under the Establish'd Rule, and Law of their Creation, according to their respective Capacities, then he declar'd this to *Man*, a reasonable Creature, as the Law of his Creation, Job 28. 25, — 28. Behold, the Fear of the Lord, that is *Wisdom*, and to depart from Evil, the Evil of Sin, is understanding.

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The *Great Men* of the World, that engross its Wealth and Honours, are *Pretenders* to Wisdom, and think none do so well for themselves as they do; but tho' their Neighbours applaud them, and their *Posterity*, that reap the Fruit of their *Worldly Wisdom*, approve their Sayings, yet this *their Way is their Folly*; Psal. 49. 13, 18. and so it will appear, when God himself shall call those *Fools*, who said to their Souls, *Take your Ease*, in *Barns* full of Corn, and *Bags* full of *Money*. Luke 12. 20. Jer. 17. 11.

The *Learned Men* of the World were *Well-wishers* to Wisdom, and modestly call'd themselves σοφισται *Lovers of Wisdom*, and many wise Principles we have from them, and wise Precepts, and yet their Philosophy fail'd them in that which *Man's great Duty and Interest* lies in, *Acquainting* himself with his Maker, and *Keeping up Communion* with him; herein they that profess'd themselves to be wise became *Fools*, Rom. 1. 22. and the World by Wisdom knew not God, 1 Cor. 1. 21.

But true *Christians* are, without doubt, the truly wise Men, to whom Christ is made of God Wisdom, 1 Cor. 1. 30. in whom are hid, not from them, but for them, all the *Treasures of Wisdom and Knowledge*, Col. 2. 3. They understand themselves best, and on which Side their Interest lies, that give up themselves to the Conduct of Christ, and his Word and Spirit; that consult his *Oracles*, and govern themselves by them, which are indeed the truest *Oracles of Reason*, Prov. 9. 10. Men never begin to be wise, 'till they begin to be *Religious*; and they then leave off to be wise, when they leave off to do good, Psal. 36. 3.

Now to recommend to us the Study and Practice of this true Wisdom, to bring us into a willing Subjection to her Authority, and keep us

to a conscientious Observance of her Dictates, the Great God is here by *Solomon* reasoning with us, from those Topicks, which in other Cases use to be *cogent*, and *commanding* enough. It is wonderful Condescension, that He who has an indisputable Authority over us, thus vouchsafes to *reason with us*; to draw with the *Cords of a Man*, and the *Bands of Love*, Hos. 11. 4. when he might make use only of the *Cords of a God*, and the *Bands of the Law*, Psal. 2. 3. to invite us to that by precious Promises, which he *enjoins* upon us by his Precepts, and those *not grievous*, 1 John 5. 3.

Interest is the great *Governess* of the World; which when Men are once *convinc'd* of, they will be *sway'd* by more than by any thing else; every One is for *what he can get*, and therefore applies himself to that which he thinks he can *get by*; the common Enquiry is, *Who will shew us any good?* We would all be *happy*, would all be *easy*.

Now it is here demonstrated by Eternal Truth it self, That *It is our Interest to be Religious*, and, therefore, *Religion* deserves to be called *Wisdom*; because it teaches us to do well for our selves; and it is certain, That the Way to be *Happy*, that is, perfectly *Holy*, hereafter, is to be *Holy*, that is, truly *Happy*, now. It is laid down for a Principle here, *Happy is the Man that findeth Wisdom*, ver. 13. that finds the Principles and Habits of it planted in his own Soul by Divine Grace; that having diligently *sought*, has at length *found* that Pearl of great Price, and the *Man that getteth understanding*, reckons himself therein a true *Gainer*. The Man that *draws out Understanding*, so the Original word signifies; that *produceth* it, and *brings it forth*; Qui profert intelligentiam, and so the *Chaldee* reads it, — Happy is the Man, that having

a good Principle in him, makes Use of it both for his own, and others Benefit; that having *laid up*, lays out.

It is necessary to our being *Happy*, that we have right Notions of *Happiness*; the Nature of it, wherein it consists, what are the Ingredients of it, and what the Ways that lead to it; for many keep themselves *miserable* by thinking themselves *happy*, when really they are not; and we have Reason to suspect their Mistake concerning themselves, because they mistake so grossly concerning others; They call the Proud happy, Mal. 3. 15. They bless the Covetous whom the Lord abhors, Psal. 10. 4. It concerns us, therefore, to consider, whence we take our Measures of Happiness, and what Rules we go by in Judging of it; that we may not covet our Lot with those, with whom we should dread to have our Lot; that we may not say as the Psalmist was tempted to say, when he look'd upon the outward Prosperity of Worldly People, *Happy is the People, that is in such a Case*; but as he was determin'd to say, when he look'd upon the true Felicity of Godly People, *Happy, thrice happy, for ever happy, is that People, whose God is the Lord*, Psal. 144. 15. And as God here saith, whose Judgment, we are sure, is according to Truth, *Happy is the Man that finds Wisdom*.

The *Happiness* of those that are *Religious* is here prov'd,

1. From the true Profit that is to be got by Religion; *Godliness is profitable to all Things*, 1 Tim. 4. 8. 'tis of universal Advantage. Tho' we may be Losers for our Religion, yet we shall not only not be Losers by it, but we shall be unspeakable Gainers in the End. They that trade with Wisdom's Talents, will find the Merchandize of it better

better than the Merchandize of Silver, and the Gain thereof than fine Gold, and that it is more precious than Rubies. As long since as Job's Time it was agreed, that the Advantages of Religion were such, that as they cou'd not be purchas'd, so they could not be valu'd with the Gold of Ophir, the precious Onyx or the Sapphire; The Topaz of Ethiopia could not equal them, Job 28. 16, 19. Length of Days is in Wisdom's right Hand, even Life for evermore; Length of Days, and no Shortning of them; and in her left Hand Riches and Honour, Ver. 16 the unsearchable Riches of Christ, and the Honour that comes from God, which are true Riches, and true Honours, because durable, because Eternal, and for ever out of the Danger of Poverty, and Disgrace.

In all Labour there is Profit, more or less, of one kind or other, but no Profit like that in the Labour of Religion: They who make a Business of it, will find great Advantage by it; its present Incomes are valuable, and a comfortable, honourable Maintenance for a Soul, but its future Recompences infinitely more so, above what we are able either to speak, or think.

2. From the *transcendent Pleasure* that is to be found in it. Here's Profit and Pleasure twisted, which compleats the Happiness. *Omne tulit punctum, qui miscuit utile dulci.* Those that pursue the Gains of the World in Wealth and Riches, must be willing to deny themselves in their Pleasures; and they that will indulge themselves in their Pleasures, must be content not to get Money, but to spend it: As they that are Covetous know they must not be Voluptuous; so they that are Voluptuous leave no Room to be Covetous; but it is not so in the Profits and Pleasures of Religion: Here a Man may both get, and save the spiritual Riches

of Divine Grace, and yet at the same time bathe in a full Stream of Divine Consolations, and be never the less a Holy *Epicure* in spiritual Delights, for his *Laying up Treasures in Heaven*; the Soul may even then *dwell at Ease*, when it is *labouring* most diligently for the *Meat* that endures to *Eternal Life*.

This is that which the Text speaks of; and both the *Profit* and *Pleasure* of Religion are put together in the next Words, *She is a Tree of Life*, ver. 18. both enriching and delighting to *them that lay hold upon her*; what Gain or Comfort like that of Life?

First, We are here assur'd, That her *Ways* are *Ways of Pleasantness*; not only pleasant *Ways*, but in the Abstract, *Ways of Pleasantness*, as if Pleasantness were *confin'd* to those *Ways*, and not to be found any where else; and the Pleasantness ariseth not from any foreign Circumstance, but from the *innate* Goodness of the *Ways* themselves. Or it notes the exceeding superlative Pleasantness of Religion; 'tis as pleasant as *Pleasantness* it self; *They are Ways of Pleasantness*, □y, 'tis the Word from which *Naomi* had her Name in the Day of her Prosperity, which afterwards she disclaim'd; Ruth 1. 20. *Call me not Naomi pleasant, but Marah bitter*. Think you hear Wisdom saying on the contrary, *Call me not Marah bitter*, as some have miscall'd me, but call me *Naomi, pleasant*. The Vulgar *Latin* reads it *Via pulchra*; Her *Ways* are *beautiful Ways*, *Ways of Sweetness*, so the *Chaldee*.

Wisdom's *Ways* are so; *i. e.* The *Ways* which she has directed us to walk in, the *Ways* of her Commandments, those are such, as if we *keep close to*, and *go on in*, we shall certainly find true Pleasure

Pleasure and Satisfaction. Wisdom saith, *This is the Way walk in it*, and you shall not only find *Life* at the End, but *Pleasure* in the Way. That which is the *only right Way* to Happiness, we must resolve to travel, and to proceed, and persevere in it, whether it be fair or foul, pleasant or unpleasant; but it is a great Encouragement to a Traveller, to know that his Way is not only the *right Way*, but a *pleasant Way*, and such the Way to Heaven is.

God had told us by *Solomon*, Chap. 2. 3, 4. that we must cry after Knowledge, must give our Voice to Understanding, that we must seek it, and search for it, must spare no Cost, or Pains to get it; He had told us, that this Wisdom would restrain us, from the Way both of the *evil Man*, and of the *strange Woman*, Chap. 2. 12, 16. that it would keep us from all the forbidden Pleasures of Sense; Now lest these *Restraints* from Pleasure, and *Constraints* to Piety and Labour, should discourage any from the Ways of Religion, he here assures us, not only that our Pains will be abundantly recompenc'd with the Profits of Religion, but the Pleasures we forego, will be abundantly balanc'd with the Pleasures we shall enjoy.

Secondly, It is added, That *all her Paths are Peace*. Peace is sometimes put for *all good*; here some take it for the Good of *Safety*, and *Protection*. Many Ways are *pleasant*, they are clean, and look smooth, but they are *dangerous*, either not sound at Bottom, or beset with Thieves; but the Ways of Wisdom have in them a *holy Security*, as well as a *holy Serenity*; and they that walk in them have God himself for their *Shield* as well as their *Sun*, and are not only joyful in the *Hope of Good*, but are, or may be *quiet* also from the *Fear of Evil*.

But we may take it for the Good of *Pleasure* and *Delight*, and so it speaks the same with the former Part of the Verse: As there is *Pleasantness* in Wisdom's Ways, so there is *Peace* in all her *Paths*.

1. There is not only *Peace in the End* of Religion, but *Peace in the Way*. There is not only *Peace* provided as a *Bed*, for good Men to *lye down in* at Night, when their *Work* is done, and their *Warfare* is accomplish'd, They shall then *enter into Peace, rest in their Beds*, Isa. 57. 2. *Mark the perfect Man, and behold the upright, for the End of that Man is Peace*, Psal. 37. 37. 'tis everlasting *Peace*: But there is also *Peace* provided as a *Shade*, for good Men to *work in* all Day, that they may not only do their *Work*, but do it with *Delight*; For even the *Work of Righteousness*, as well as its *Reward*, *shall be Peace*; Isa. 32. 17. and the immediate *Effect of Righteousness*, as well as its *Issue* at last, *Quietness and Assurance for ever*.

'Tis possible, that *War* may be the *Way* to *Peace*, *Sic quarimus Pacem*, thus we *pursue Peace*, is the best *Motto* to be engraven on *Weapons of War*; but it is the *Glory* of those who are truly Religious, that they not only *seek Peace*, but *enjoy it*; The *Peace of God* rules their *Hearts*, and by that *Means* keeps them, and even while they are *Travellers*, they have *Peace*, tho' they are not yet *at home*.

It is the *Misery* of the *Carnal, Irreligious World*, that *the Way of Peace they have not known*, Rom. 3. 17. for they are *like the troubled Sea*; there is *no Peace, saith my God, to the Wicked*, Isa. 57. 20, 21. How can *Peace* be spoken to them that are not the *Sons of Peace*? Luke 10. 4, 5. to them that have not *Grace* for the *Word of Peace*

to fasten upon? They may cry *Peace* to themselves, but there is no true *Peace* either in their Way, or in their End; To such I say, as in 2 Kings 9. 18. *What hast thou to do with Peace? turn thee behind me*; while in God's Name I speak *Peace* to all that are in Covenant with the *God of Peace*, to all the faithful Subjects of the *Prince of Peace*, they have experimentally *known the Way of Peace*, and to them I say, *Go on, and prosper; Go on in Peace*, for the God of Love and Peace is, and will be with you.

2. There is not only this *Peace* in the *Way* of Religion in general; but in the particular *Paths* of that Way; View it in the several Acts and Instances of it, in the Exercise of every Grace, in the Performance of every Duty, and you will find, that what is said of the Body of Christianity, is true of every Part of it, 'tis *Peace*.

The *Ways* of Religion are *track'd* as Path-ways are; Cant. 1. 3. *we go forth by the Footsteps of the Flock*. 'Tis the *good old Way* that all have walk'd in, that are gone to Heaven before us, and this contributes something to the *Peace* of it; Walk in the *old Way*, and you shall find *Rest to your Souls*, Jer. 6. 16. We go on in our Way with so much the more Assurance, when we see those going before us, who *through Faith and Patience are now inheriting the Promise*; let us but keep the *Path*, and we shall not miss our *Way*.

The *Chaldee* reads it, *Itinera ejus pacifica*; her *Journies* are *Peace*. The *Paths* of wisdom are not like Walks in a Garden, which we make use of for Diversion only, and an Amusement; but like Tracks in a great Road, which we press forward in with Care and Pains, as a Traveller in his Journey, *plus ultra* still, 'till we come to our Journey's End. We must remember, that

in the Ways of Religion we are *upon our Journey*, and 'tis a Journey of Business, Business of Life and Death, and, therefore, we must not trifle, or lose Time; but must *lift up our Feet*, as Jacob did, Gen. 29. 1. (*Then Jacob went on his Way*, in the Margin it is, *he lift up his Feet*) and *lift up our Hearts*, as Jehoshaphat did, in the Ways of the Lord, 2 Chr. 17. 6. and not take up short of the End of our Faith and Hope, not take up short of Home: And tho' the Journey is long, and requires all this Care and Application, yet it is *pleasant*, it is Peace notwithstanding.

In the Way of Religion and Godliness taken generally, there are *different Paths*, according to the different Sentiments of wise and good Men in the less weighty Matters of the Law; but blessed be God, every *different Path* is not a *By-path*; and if it be not, but keep within the same Hedges of Divine Truths and Laws, as to the Essentials of Religion, it may be, it shall be a *Way of Peace*; for both he that *eateth*, and he that *eateth not*, *giveth God Thanks*, Rom. 14. 6. and has Comfort in it. If we rightly understand that the *Kingdom of God*, the Way of wisdom, is *not Meat and Drink*, and we shall find it to be, which indeed it is, *Righteousness and Peace, and Joy in the Holy Ghost*, Rom. 14. 17.

3. There is this Peace in *all* the Paths of Wisdom; in all the Instances of *Pure and Undeified* Religion; look into them *all*, make Trial of them *all*, and you'll find there's none to be excepted against, none to be quarrel'd with; they are all uniform, and of a Piece; the same golden Thread of *Peace and Pleasure* runs through the whole Web of serious Godliness.

We cannot say so of this World, That *all* its Paths are *Peace*, however some of them may pretend to give the Mind a little Satisfaction; its *Pleasures* have their *Allays*; that which onething *sweetens*, another comes presently and *embitters*. But as there is a Universal Rectitude in the *Principles* of Religion, Psal. 119. 128. *I have esteem'd all thy Precepts concerning all Things to be right*; and Prov. 8. 8. *All the Words of my Mouth are in Righteousness* (saith wisdom) *and there is nothing froward or preverse in them*; so there is a Universal Peace and Pleasure in the *Practice* of Religion: *All our Paths* if such as they *should be*, will be such as we *could wish*.

The Doctrine, therefore, contain'd in these Words is,

That *True Piety bath True Pleasure in it.* Or thus;

The *Ways of Religion are Pleasant and Peaceful Ways.*



CHAP. I.

The *Explication of the Doctrine.*

IT is a *plain* Truth which we have here laid down, and there is little in it that needs *Explication*; 'Twere well for us, if we would but as readily *subscribe* to the *Certainty* of it, as we *apprehend* the *Sense* and *Meaning* of it. Nor will any complain, that it is hard to be understood; but those

those who *know* no other Pleasures but those of Sense, and *relish* no other, and therefore resolve not to give Credit to it. Those who think, *How can this be*, that there should be Pleasure in Piety, will be ready to question, *What's the Meaning of this Doctrine?* and to call it a *hard Saying*.

You know what *Pleasure* is, I hope, you know something what the Pleasure of the *Mind* is, a Pleasure which the *Soul* has the *Sensation* of. And do you not know something what *Piety* is, a due Regard to a God above us, and having the Eyes of the Soul ever up unto him; and then you know what I mean when I say, That there is an Abundance of real Pleasure and Satisfaction, in the Ways of Religion and Godliness.

But to help you a little in the understanding of it, and to prevent Mistakes, observe,

First, That I speak of *true Piety*, and of that *as far as it goes*.

1. *Hypocrites are very much Strangers to the Delights and Pleasures of Religion*; nay, they are *altogether* so, for it is *Joy* which those *Strangers* do not *intermeddle with*. *Counterfeit Piety* can never bring in *true Pleasure*. He that *acts a Part* upon a Stage, tho' it be the Part of one that's never so *pleasant*, tho' he may *humour* the *Pleasantness* well enough, he doth not *experience* it. The Pleasures of God's House lye not in the *outer Courts*, but *within the Vail*. None know what the *Peace of God* means, but those that are under the Dominion and Operation of his Grace; nor can any that *deny the Power of Godliness*, expect to share in the *Pleasures* of it. *When Wisdom enters into thine Heart*, takes Possession of that, and becomes a living, active Principle there, then, and not 'till then, it is *pleasant unto thy Soul*, Prov.

2. 10. They that aim at no more but the *Credit* of

of their Religion before Men, justly fall short of the *Comfort* of it in themselves

Hypocrites have *other Things* that they delight in, the *Satisfactions* of the *World*, the *Gratifications* of *Sense*, which put their Mouths out of Taste to *spiritual Pleasures*, so that they have *no Pleasure in them*. They that have their Hearts upon their Marketings, are weary of the *New Moons* and the *Sabbaths*, Amos 8. 5. With good Reason, therefore, doth *Job* ask, *Will the Hypocrite delight himself in the Almighty?* ch. 27. 10. No, his Soul takes its *Ease* in the Creature, and returns not to the Creator as its *Rest*, and *Home*.

Some *Flashy Pleasure* an Hypocrite may have in Religion, from a *Land Flood* of sensible Affections, who yet has not the least Taste of the *River of God's Pleasures*. There were those who *delighted to know God's Ways*, Isa. 58. 2. they met with some pretty Notions in them, that surpriz'd them, and pleas'd their Fancies, but they did not delight to walk in them. The stony Ground *receiv'd the Word with Joy*, and yet receiv'd no lasting Benefit by it, Luke 8. 13. *Herod* heard *John* gladly, Mark 6. 20. He found something very agreeable in his Sermons, and which Natural Conscience could not but embrace, and yet could not bear to be reprov'd for his *Herodias*. A florid Preacher, such as *Ezekiel* was, may be to them as a very lovely Song of one that can play well on an Instrument, Ezek. 33. 32. and yet at the same time, the *Word of the Lord*, if it touch their Consciences, and shew them their Transgressions, is to them a *Reproach*, Jer. 6. 10.

They whose Hearts are not *right with God* in their Religion, cannot have the Pleasure of *Communion with God*: for it is the Soul only that *converseth with God*, and that he communicates himself

self to; *Bodily Exercise profiteth little*, 1 Tim. 4. 8. and, therefore, *pleaseth little*. The Service of God is a Burthen, and a Task to an unsanctify'd, unrenewed Heart, 'tis out of its Element when it is brought into that *Air*; and, therefore, instead of snuffing it up, and saying, Behold what a Pleasure it is? it *snuffs at it*, and saith, *Behold what a Weariness it is?* Mal. 1. 13.

Nor can they take any Pleasure in *Communing* with their *own Consciences*, or in *their Reflections*, for they are ready upon all Occasions, to give them Uneasiness, by Charging them with that which is *disagreeable* to their Profession, and gives the Lye to it: And tho' they cry *Peace, Peace* to themselves, they have that within them, that tells them the *God of Heaven* doth not *speak Peace to them*; And this casts a Damp upon all their Pleasure, that their Religion it self *gives them Pain*, God himself is a *Terror* to them, and the Gospel it self condemns them for their Insincerity. And in Time of Trouble and Distress none are so much afraid, as the *Sinners in Zion*, Isa. 33. 14. the secret Sinners there; and *Fearfulness* is the greatest *Surprize* of all to the *Hypocrites*, Amos 6. 1. that were at *Ease in Zion*, and thought its *strong holds* would be their *Security*.

And, therefore it is, that Hypocrites cast off Religion, and *discharge themselves* of the Profession of it, after they have a while *disguis'd themselves* withit, because it did not *fit easy*; and they are weary of it. Tradesmen that *take no Pleasure* in their Business, will not stick to it long, no more will those that take no Pleasure in their Religion; nor will any thing carry us through the *outward Difficulties* of it, but the *inward Delights* of it; if those be wanting, the *Tree* is not *water'd*, and therefore, even its *Leaf* will soon
wither,

wither, Psal. 1. 3. The Hypocrite will not *always call upon God*, will not long do it, because he *will not delight himself in the Almighty*; Job 27. 9, 10. And this ought not to be a *Stumbling-Block* to us. Thus Hypocrites in Religion prove Apostates from it; and the Reason is, because they never found it *pleasant*; they never found it *pleasant*, because they were never *sincere* in it, which was *their Fault*, and not the Fault of the Religion they profess'd.

Let us, therefore, *take heed, and beware of Hypocrisy*, Luke 12. 1. as ever we hope to find *Pleasure* in Religion. Counterfeit Piety hath some other End *in View*, some other End *to serve*, than that which is the Spring of *true Delight*, They who rest in that, *hew them out Cisterns*, Jer. 2. 13. that can hold but little Water, and that *dead*; nay, *broken Cisterns* that *can hold no Water*; and how can they expect the Pleasure which they have, that cleave to, and continually draw from the *Fountain of Life* and *Living Waters*; No, as their *Principles* are, such are their *Pleasures*; as their *Aims* are, such are their *Joys*; they appeal to the World, and to the World they shall go; but let not the Credit of Religion suffer then, for the sake of those who are only Pretenders to it; and so, indeed, Enemies to it.

2. It is possible, that *true Christians* may, through their own *Fault* and *Folly*, want very much of the *Pleasure of Religion*; and therefore, I say, *True Piety as far as it goes is very pleasant*; as far as it has its due Influence upon us, and is rightly understood, and *liv'd up to*.

We abide by it, That *Wisdom's Ways* are always *pleasant*, and yet must own, that *Wisdom's Children* are sometimes *unpleasant*, and therein come short of *Justifying* Wisdom in this Matter as they ought to do, Luke 7. 35. and rather give Advantage

tage to her Accusers, and Prejudice to her Cause. Either they *miss* these Ways, and turn aside out of them, and so lose the Pleasure that is to be found in them; or (which is a common Case) they *refuse to take the Comfort*, which they might have in these Ways. They hamper themselves with needless Perplexities, make the Yoke *heavy* which Christ has made *easy*, and that *frightful* which he design'd should be *encouraging*; they *indulge* themselves, and then, as *Jonah* when he was angry, *justify* themselves in causeless Grievs and Fears, and think they do well to *put themselves into an Agony*, to be *very heavy* and *fore amaz'd*, and their Souls *exceeding sorrowful, even unto Death*, as Christ's was; whereas Christ put himself into such an Agony to make us *easy*.

But let not true Piety suffer in its Reputation because of this; for tho' it be call'd a *Religious Melancholy*, it is not so, for it is contrary to the very Nature and Design of Religion, while it *shelters itself* under the Colour of it, and pretends to *take Rise* from it. It is rather to be call'd a *Superstitious Melancholy*, *Σεισδαμονία*, arising from such a *slavish* Fear of God, as the *Heathen* were driven by to their *Demons* and barbarous Sacrifices; which is a great Injury to the Honour of his *Goodness*, as well as a great Injury to themselves.

If the Professors of Religion look for that in the *World*, which is to be had in *God* only, and that is *Perfect Happiness*; or, if they look for that in *themselves*, which is to be had in Christ only, and that is a *Perfect Righteousness*: or, if they look for that *on Earth* which is to be had in *Heaven* only, and that is *Perfect Holiness*; and then fret, and grieve, and go mourning from Day to Day, because they are disappointed in
their

their Expectations, they may thank themselves, *Why seek they the Living among the Dead?* Luke 24. 5, 17.

Let but Religion, *true and pure* Religion in all the Laws and Instances of it, command and prevail, and these *Tears* will soon be *wiped away*: Let but God's Servants *take their Work before them*, allow each *Principle* of their Religion its *due Weight*, and each *Practice* of it its *due Place* and *Proportion*, and let them not dash one *Precept of the Gospel*, any more than one *Table of the Law*, in Pieces against the other: Let them look upon it to be as much their Duty to *rejoyce in Christ Jesus*, as to *mourn for Sin*; nay, and more, for *this* is in order to *that*; and then we shall not fear, that their Sorrows will in the least shake the *Truth* of our Doctrine, for as far as the Religion is carry'd, it will carry this Character along with it, and further it cannot be expected.

Secondly, In true *Piety*, I say, there is a *Pleasure*; there is that which we may find Comfort in, and fetch Satisfaction from. There's a *Bonum jucundum* as well as *utile*. That's pleasant which is *agreeable*, which the Soul *rejoyceth* in, or at least *reposeth* in; or which it *relisheth*, pleaseth itself with, and desireth the Continuance and Repetition of. Let a Man's Faculties be in their due Frame and Temper, not vitiated, corrupted, or deprav'd, and there is that in the Exercise of Religion which highly *suits* them, and *satisfies* them. And this Pleasure is such as is not *allay'd* with any thing to cast a Damp upon it.

1. The Ways of Religion are *right* and *pleasant*; they are pleasant without the Allay of Injury and Iniquity. Sin pretends to have its Pleasures, but they are the *perverting of that which is right*,

right, Job 33. 27. they are *stolen Waters*, Prov. 9. 17. unjust, tho' pleasant; but the Pleasures of Godliness are as agreeable to the *Rectitude* of our Nature, as they are gratifying to the pure and undebauched Desires of it. It is the Way in which we *should go*; and the Way, in which, if we were not wretchedly degenerated, we *would go* of Choice.

They are *right*, for they are *mark'd* out to us by our *rightful Lord*, who having given us the Being of rational Creatures, has Authority to give us a Law suited to our Being; and he has done it both by natural Conscience, and by the written Word, he hath said, *This is the Way, walk in it*, Isa. 30. 21. 'Tis not only permitted and allow'd us, but charg'd and commanded us to walk in it; hath sent us as Messengers from him to travel this Road upon his Errand.

They are *right*, for they lead directly to our *great End*, have a Tendency to our Welfare, here and for ever. They are the only right Way to that which is the Felicity of our Being, which we shall certainly miss and come short of, if we do not walk in this Way.

But that's not all, they are also *pleasant*; *Behold, how good and how pleasant!* Psal. 133. 1. It is the Happiness of those that *fear God*, that he not only *teacheth them in the Way that he shall chuse*, (and we may be sure that's the right Way) but also that *their Souls shall dwell at Ease*, Psal. 25. 12, 13. And justly may they *dwell at Ease*, who have infinite Wisdom itself to chuse their Way, and guide them in it. That may be *right* which is not *pleasant*, and that *pleasant* which is not *right*, but Religion is both; therefore in the next Verse it is compar'd to the *Tree of Life*: The *Tree of Knowledge* was indeed *pleasant to the Eyes*,

Eyes, and a *Tree to be desir'd*, but it was *forbidden*; and therefore Religion is call'd a *Tree of Life*, Gen. 29. 6. which was not only *pleasant*, but was allow'd till Sin enter'd.

2. They are *easy* and *pleasant*; pleasant without the Allay of *Toil* and *Difficulty*, any more than ariseth from the Corruption of our own Nature: That indeed makes such Opposition, that we have need of Arguments; and, blessed be God, we have good Arguments to prove the Practice of Religion *easy*; but it is more than so, it is *pleasant*.

Much less is said than is intended, when we are told that *his Commandments are not grievous*, 1 John 5. 3. They are not only not *grievous* and *galling*, but they are *gracious* and *pleasing*. His Yoke is *easy*, Matt. 11. 30. The Word there us'd, *χρησός*, signifies more than so, 'tis *sweet* and *gentle*; not only *easy* as a Yoke is to the Neck, when 'tis so well fitted as not to hurt it, but *easy* as a Pillow is to the Head when 'tis *wearry* and *sleepy*. 'Tis not only tolerable, but very comfortable. There is not only no Matter of Complaint in the Ways of God, nothing to hurt us, but there is abundant Matter of Joy and Rejoycing: It is not only Work which is *not Weariness*, but Work which is *its own Wages*; such a *Tree of Life*, as will not only screen us from the Storm and Tempest, and feed us with necessary Food, but we may sit down under the Shadow of it with great Delight, and the Fruit of it will be *sweet unto our Taste*, Cant. 2. 3.

3. They are *gainful* and *pleasant*, and have not the Allay of *Expense* and *Loss*: That may be *profitable*, which yet may be *unpleasant*, and that *pleasant*, which afterwards may prove very *unprofitable* and *prejudicial*; what *Fruit* have Sinners from

from those things in which yet they said they had *Pleasure*? *Rom.* 6. 21. But Religion brings both *Pleasure* with it, and *Profit* after it: The Pleasures of Religion do not cost us dear; there's no Loss by them when the Account comes to be balanc'd.

The *Gain* of this World is usually fetch'd in by Toil and uneasy Labour, which is grievous to Flesh and Blood. The *Servants* of this World are *Drudges* to it; they *rise up early, sit up late, eat the Bread of Sorrows*, *Psal.* 127. 2. in pursuit of its Wealth. They *labour and bereave their Souls of Good*, *Eccles.* 4. 8. but the *Servants* of God have a *Pleasure* even in the Work they are to *get by*, and which they shall be recompenced for.

Besides the Tendency that there is in the Practice of serious Godliness to our Happiness in the other Life, there is much in it that conduceth to our Comfort in this Life. *David* observes it to the Honour of Religion, *Psal.* 19. 10. that not only *after keeping*, but *in keeping* God's Commandments, *there is a great Reward*; a present great Reward of Obedience in Obedience. A *good Man is satisfied in himself*, *Prov.* 14. 14. that is, in that which Divine Grace hath wrought in him; and the Saints are said to *sing in the Ways of the Lord*, *Psal.* 138. 5. as those that find them pleasant Ways.

And the closer we *adhere* to the Rules of Religion, and the more intimate our Converse is with Divine things, the more we live with an Eye to *Christ* and *another World*, the more Comfort we are likely to have in our own Bosoms. *Great Peace* have they that *love God's Laws*, *Psal.* 119. 165. and the more they love it, the greater their Peace is; nay, 'tis promis'd to the Church, that

that all her Children shall be taught of the Lord, (and those whom he teacheth are well taught, and taught to do well) and then great shall be the Peace of her Children, Isa. 54. 13. it shall be entail'd upon them; Peace like a River, in omne volubilis ævum.

Thirdly, I call it a true Pleasure. As there is Science, falsely so call'd, 1 Tim. 6. 20. so there is Pleasure falsely so call'd. One of the Ancients distinguishes between ἡδονὰς ἀληθεῖς and ἡδονὰς ψευδεῖς, Damascen. Orthodox. Fid. l. 2. Pleasures that have some Truth in them, and Pleasures that deceive us with a Lye in their right Hand. Some have said that the School of Epicurus, which is commonly branded and condemned for making Pleasure Man's chief Good, did not mean sensual Pleasure, but the Pleasure of the Mind. And we should be willing enough to admit it, but that the other Principles of his Philosophy were so atheistical and irreligious. But this we are sure of, that it is a true Pleasure which Religion secures to us; a Pleasure that deserves the Name, and answers it to the full.

It is a true Pleasure, for,

1. It is real, and not counterfeit. Carnal Worldlings pretend a great Satisfaction in the Enjoyments of the World, and the Gratifications of Sense, Soul, take thine Ease, saith one, Luke 12. 20. I have found me out Substance, saith another, Hos. 12. 8. even the Life of my Hand; saith a third, I have seen the Fire, Isa. 57. 10. The Wicked boasts of his Hearts Desire; but Solomon assures us, not only that the End of that Mirth is Heaviness, but that even in Laughter the Heart is sorrowful, Prov. 14. 13. Both those that make a God of their Belly, and those that make a God of their Money, find such a constant Pain and Uneasiness attending their

their Spiritual Idolatries, that their Pleasure is but from the Teeth outward. Discontent at present Disappointments, and Fear of worse, ungovern'd *Passions* (which seldom are made less *turbulent* by the Gratifications of the Appetite) and above all, Conscience of Guilt, and Dread of Divine Wrath, these *give them the Lye*, when they boast of their Pleasures, which with such Allays are not to be boasted of; they would not be thought to be disappointed in that which they have chosen for their Happiness, and therefore they seem to be *pleased*, they seem to be *pleasant*, when really their Heart, if it knows its own Wickedness, cannot but *know its own Bitterness*, Prov. 14. 10.

And many of the good Things of this World, of which we said, *These same shall comfort us*, prove Vexations to us; and we are disappointed in that, wherein we most promis'd our selves Satisfaction; *If we say our Bed shall comfort us*, perhaps it is not a Bed to rest on, but a Bed to toss on, as it was to poor *Job*, when *wearisom Nights were appointed to him*. Nay, such Strangers are we to *real* Pleasure in the Things of this Life, and so oft do we deceive our selves with that which is *counterfeit*, that we wish to live to those Days of Life which we are told will be *evil Days*, and those *Years*, of which we are assured that we shall say, *We have no Pleasure in them*, Eccles. 12. 1.

But the Pleasures of Religion are *solid, substantial* Pleasures, and not *painted*; Gold, and not gilded over: These Sons of Pleasure *inherit Substance*, Prov. 8. 21. 'Tis that *which is*, Job 15. 11. The Foundation firm, the Superstructure strong, the *Consolations of God* not few, nor *small*, while a vain and foolish World *cause their Eyes to fly upon that which is not*, Prov. 23. 5. Worldly People pretend
to

to the Joy they have not; but Godly People *conceal* the Joy they have; as he did that had *found the Treasure hid in the Field*. They have, like their Master, *Meat to eat, which the World knows not of*, John 4. 32.

2. It is *rational*, and not *brutish*. 'Tis the Pleasure of the *Soul*, not of *Sense*; 'tis the *peculiar* Pleasure of a *Man*, not that which we have in Common with the inferior Creatures. The Pleasures of Religion are not those of the meer *Animal* Life, which arise from the Gratifications of the Senses of the Body, and its Appetites; no, they affect the *Soul*, that Part of us by which we are ally'd to the World of Spirits, that *Noble* Part of us, and therefore are to be call'd the *true* Pleasures of a Man.

The Brute Creatures have the same Pleasures of Sense that we have; and perhaps in some of them the Senses are more *exquisite*, and consequently they have them in a much higher Degree, nor are their Pleasures liable to the Correctives of Reason and Conscience as ours are. Who live such merry Lives as the *Leviathan*, who *plays in the Deep*? or the Birds that *sing among the Branches*? Psal. 104. 12, 26.

But what are these to a Man, who being *taught more than the Beasts of the Earth, and made wiser than the Fowls of Heaven*, Job 35. 10, 11. and being *dignify'd* above the Beasts, not so much by the Powers of *Reason*, as by a Capacity for *Religion*, is certainly design'd for Enjoyments of a more excellent Nature, for Spiritual and Heavenly Delights. When God made Man, he left him not to the Enjoyments of the wide World, with the other Creatures, but *inclos'd* him a *Paradise*, a Garden of *Pleasure* (so *Eden* signifies) where he shou'd have Delights *proper for him*; signify'd indeed

indeed by the Pleasures of a Garden, pleasant Trees and their Fruits, but *really* the Delights of a *Soul*, that was a Ray of Divine Light, and a Spark of Divine Fire, newly breath'd into him from above, and on which God's *Image* and *Likeness* was imprinted. And we never recover our Felicity, which we lost by our first Parents indulging the Appetite of the Body, 'till we come to the *due Relish* of those Pleasures, which Man has in common with Angels, and a *due Contempt* of those which he has in common with the Brutes.

The Pleasures of Wisdom's Ways may at second hand *affect the Body*, and be an Advantage to that; hence it is said, *Prov.* 3. 8. to be *Health to the Navel*, and *Marrow to the Bones*; but its Residence is in the *hidden Man of the Heart*, *1 Pet.* 3. 4. and its Comforts *delight the Soul in the Multitude of its Thoughts*, *Psal.* 94. 19. 'Tis *pleasant to the Soul*, and makes that like a *water'd Garden*. These are Pleasures which a Man by the Assistance of Divine Grace may *reason himself into*; and not (as it is with sensual Pleasures) *reason himself out of*.

There is no *Pleasure* separate from that of Religion, which pretends to be an intellectual Pleasure, but that of *Learning*, and that of *Honour*; but as to the Pleasure of a *Proud Man* in his Dignities, and the Respects paid him, as *Herod*, in the Acclamations of the Crowd, it doth but affect the Fancy. It is *Vain-Glory*, it is not *Glory*; 'Tis but the Folly of him that receives the Honour, fed by the Folly of them that give it; so that it doth not deserve to be call'd a *Rational Pleasure*; 'tis a *Lust of the Mind* that's gratify'd by it, that is as much an Instance of our Degeneracy, as any of the *Lusts of the Flesh* are.

And

And as to the Pleasure of a *Scholar*, abstracted from Religion, it is, indeed, *rational* and *intellectual*; but it is only the Pleasure of the Mind in *knowing* Truth, and not its *enjoying* Good. *Solomon*, that had as much of this Pleasure as ever any Man had; and as nice a Taste of it, yet hath assur'd us from his own Experience, that in *much Wisdom* of this kind is *much Grief*, and he that *increaseth Knowledge increaseth Sorrow*, Eccl. 1. 18.

But the Pleasures which a holy Soul hath in knowing God, and in Communion with him, are not only of a *spiritual Nature*, but they are *satisfying*, they are *filling* to the Soul, and make a Happiness adequate to its best Affections.

3. It is *remaining*, and not *flashy* and *transitory*: That's *true* Pleasure and deserves the Name, which will *continue* with us as a *Tree of Life*, and not wither as the *green Herb*; which will be not as the Light of a *Candle*, which is soon burnt out, but as that of the *Sun* which is a *faithful Witness in Heaven*. We reckon that most *valuable*, which is most *durable*.

The Pleasures of Sense are fading and perishing; as *the World passeth away*, 1 John 2. 17. so do the *Lusts* of it; that which at first *pleaseth* and *satisfyeth*, after a while palls and surfeits. *As the Crackling of Thorns under a Pot*, Eccles. 7. 6. which make a great Blaze, and a great Noise for a little while, but soon end in Soot and Ashes, such is the *Laughter of the Fool*; the *End of his Mirth is Heaviness*. *Belshazzar's Jollity* is soon turn'd into the utmost Consternation; *The Night of my Pleasure hath he turn'd into Fear to me*, Isa. 21. 4. The Pleasures of Sin are said to be but *for a Season*, Heb. 11. 25. for the *End of that Mirth is Heaviness*. As they have no *Consistence*, so they have no *Continuance*.

But the Pleasures of Religion will *abide*, they *wither* not in Winter, nor *tarnish* with Time, nor doth Age *wrinkle* their Beauty; Frosts nip them not, nor do Storms blast them; they continue through the greatest Opposition of Events, and despise that *Time* and *Chance*, which *happens* to all *Things under the Sun*, Eccles. 9. 11. Believers when they are sorrowful they are but *as* sorrowful, for they are *always* rejoicing, 2 Cor. 6. 10. and 2. 14. *Thanks be to God, who always causeth us to triumph.* If an *Immortal Soul* make an *Eternal God* its *chief Joy*, what should hinder but that it should *rejoice evermore*, 1 Thes. 5. 16. for as the *Treasure*, so the *Pleasure* is laid up there, where *neither Moth nor Rust* can corrupt, nor *Thieves break through and steal.* Christ's Joy which he gives to those that are his, is Joy which *no Man taketh from them*, John 16. 22. for 'tis *their Heart* that *rejoiceth.* They are the Beginning of Everlasting Pleasures, the Earnest and Foretaste of them, so that they are in Effect, *Pleasures for evermore.*

So then, The great Truth which I desire my Heart and yours may be fully convinc'd of is this; That *A Holy, Heavenly Life spent in the Service of God, and in Communion with him, is without Doubt, the most pleasant and comfortable Life any Man can live in this World.*





C H A P. II.

The Pleasure of being Religious, prov'd from the Nature of True Religion, and many particular Instances of it.

THE Doctrine needs no *farther* Explication, nor can have any *better* than our own Experience of it; but the chief Part of this Undertaking is to prove the Truth of it; And O! that God, by me, would set it before you in a true Light, so as that you may all be convinc'd of it, and embrace it as a *Faithful Saying*, and *well worthy of all Acceptation*, That a Godly Life is a pleasant Life; so as that we may be wrought upon to live such a Life.

Pleasure is a *tempting* Thing; What yields *Delight* cannot but attract *Desire*; 'Tis next to *Necessity*, so strongly doth it urge. Surely, if we were but fully perswaded of this, that *Religion* has *Pleasure* on its Side, we would be wrought upon by the *Allurement* of that to be Religious. 'Tis certainly so, let us not be in doubt of it. Here's a Bait, that has no Hook under it, a *Pleasure* courting you which has no Pain attending it, no Bitterness at the latter End of it; a *Pleasure* which God himself invites you to, and which will make you *happy, truly and eternally happy*, and shall not this work upon you?

But we may entertain our selves, and our Hearers, long enough with Discourses of the Pleasantness of Wisdom's Ways, but they will not Profit unless they be *mixed with Faith*. O!

that we would all mix Faith with this Truth! that we would yield to the Evidence of it.

To make way for the Proof of it, I would only desire two Things.

1. That you would *lay aside Prejudice*, and give a fair and impartial Hearing to this Cause, and do not *prejudge* it. He that *answers* any Matter before *he hear it*, hear it *out*, it is *Folly* and *Shame* to him; *Prov.* 8. 13, 14. especially if it be a Matter of great Importance and Concern to himself; a Matter of *Life* and *Death*. Be willing, therefore, to believe, that it is *possible* there *may*, and then I doubt not but to make out, that 'tis *certain* there *is*, true Pleasure in true Religion.

You have got a Notion it may be, and are confirm'd in it by the common Cry of the Multitude, That Religion is a *sour Melancholy Thing*, that 'tis to bid Farewel to all Pleasure and Delight, and to spend your Days in Grief and your Years in Sighing; and if we offer any Thing to the contrary, That it is a pleasant Thing, and the best Entertainment that can be to the Mind, you are ready to say as *Ezekiel's* Hearers did of him, *Doth he not speak Parables?* *Ezek.* 20. 49. doth he not speak Paradoxes? You startle at it, and start from it as a hard Saying, like *Nathaniel* when he said, *Can any good Thing come out of Nazareth?* *John* 1. 46. So you are ready to say, Can there be any Pleasure in Religion? Believe it, Sirs, There *can be*, there *cannot but be* Pleasure in it.

Do not measure Religion by the Follies of some that profess it, but do not *live up* to their Profession, nor *adorn* it; Let them bear their own Burthen, or clear themselves as they can, but you are to judge of Things, not Persons, and therefore ought not to be *prejudic'd* against Religion for their sakes. Nor should you measure

sure by the *Ill Opinions* which its Adversaries have of it, or the *Ill Name* which they endeavour to put it into, who neither *know* it, nor *love* it, and therefore care not what *unjust* Things they say to *justify* themselves in the Contempt of it, and to hinder others from Embracing it, but *think freely* of this Matter.

2. That you would *admit* this as a Principle, and abide by it, That *the Soul is the Man*: This is the *Postulatum* I lay down, in Order to the Proof of the Doctrine, and I hope it will be readily granted me, That Man is principally to be consider'd as an intellectual, immortal Being, endu'd with spiritual Powers and Capacities, ally'd to the World of Spirits, and accountable to the Father of Spirits; That there is a *Spirit in Man*, that has Sensations and Dispositions of its own, Active and Receptive Faculties distinct from those of the Body; And that this is the Part of us, which we are, and ought to be most concern'd about; because it is really well, or ill *with us*, according as it is well or ill *with our Souls*.

Believe, That in Man's present State, the Soul and the Body have separate and contesting Interests; the Body *thinks* 'tis its Interest to have its Appetites gratify'd, and to be indulg'd in its Pleasures; while the Soul *knows* 'tis its Interest to have the Appetites of the Body subdu'd and mortify'd, that *Spiritual* Pleasures may be the better relish'd; and we are here upon our Trial, which of these two we will side with.

Be *wise*, therefore, be *resolute*, and *shew your selves Men* that are acted and govern'd by Reason, and are affected with Things as Reason represents them to you; not Reason, as it is in the meer *natural Man*, clouded and plung'd, and lost in Sense; but Reason elevated and guided by Di-

vine Revelation to us, and Divine Grace in us. *Walk by Faith*, and not by *Sense*; Let the God that made you, and knows you, and wisheth you well, and from whom your Judgment must proceed, determine your Sentiments in this Matter, and the Work is done.

Now I shall, in the first Place, endeavour the Proof of this Doctrine, by shewing you *what Religion is*, wherein it *consists*, and what those Things are which constitute serious Godliness; and then you shall your selves judge, whether it be not in its own Nature *pleasant*. If you understand Religion aright, you will find, that it has an *innate Sweetness* in it, inseparable from it. Let it but *speak for it self*, and it will *recommend it self*. The very shewing of this Beauty in its own Features and Proportions, is enough to bring us all in Love with it.

You shall see the Pleasure of Religion in twelve Instances of it.

First, To be Religious is *to know the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom he hath sent*, John 17. 3. And is not that pleasant? This is the first Thing we have to do, to get our Understandings rightly *inform'd*, concerning both the *Object*, and the *Medium* of our Religious Regards, to *seek* and to *receive* this Light from Heaven, to have it diffus'd through our Souls as the Morning Light in the Air, and to be *turn'd* to the Impressions of it, *as the Clay to the Seal*, Job 38. 14. and this is a Pleasure to the Soul that understands it self, and its own true Interest. *Truly the Light is sweet, and a pleasant thing it is for the Eyes to behold the Sun*, Eccles. 11. 8. *it rejoiceth the Heart*, Prov. 15. 30. Hence *Light* is often put for Joy and Comfort; but no Light is comparable to that of the *Knowledge of the Glory of God in the Face of Jesus Christ*, 2 Cor. 4. 6. This

This is finding the Knowledge *we had lost*, and must for ever have despair'd of finding, if God had not made it known to us by his Spirit: 'Tis finding the Knowledge we are *undone without*, and happy, for ever *happy in*; for what is Heaven but this Knowledge in Perfection? 'Tis finding the Knowledge which the Soul would covet and rest in, if it had but recover'd itself from the *Delirium*, which by the Fall it is *thrown into*. They that *sat in Darkness*, when they begin to be religious, begin to *see a great Light*, Mat. 4. 16. And it is a *pleasing* Surprize to them; 'tis coming into a *new World*; such a Pleasure as none could know so well, as he that had his Sight given him, tho' he was *born blind*, Mat. 13. 26. *Blessed are your Eyes* (saith Christ to those whom he had brought into an Acquaintance with himself) *for they see. Apply thy Heart to my Knowledge*, saith Solomon, Prov. 22. 17, 18. *for it is a pleasant thing if thou keep it within thee. Thou wilt eat Honey, because it is good*, Prov. 24. 13, 14. *and the Honeycomb, which is sweet to the Taste; so shall the Knowledge of Wisdom be to thy Soul*. Could a learned Man, that had hit upon a Demonstration in *Mathematicks*, cry out in a Transport of Joy, *εὕρηκα, εὕρηκα, I have found, I have found*; and may not they much more boast of the Discovery, that have *found the Knowledge of the Most High*?

There is no Pleasure in any Learning like that of learning Christ, and the things that *belong to our everlasting Peace*; for that which is known is not small and trivial, is not doubtful and uncertain, is not foreign to us, and which we are not concern'd in; which are things that may much diminish the Pleasure of any Knowledge; but it is great and sure, and of the last Importance

to us, and the Knowledge of it gives us Satisfaction: Here we may rest our Souls. To know the Perfections of the Divine Nature, the unsearchable Riches of Divine Grace, to be led into the Mystery of our Redemption and Reconciliation by Christ; this is Food, such Knowledge as this is a Feast to the Soul: 'Tis *Meat indeed*, and *Drink indeed*; 'tis the Knowledge of that *which the Angels desire to look into*, 1 Pet. 1. 12. If the Knowledge of the Law of God was so sweet to *David*, *sweeter than Honey to his Taste*, Psal. 19. 10. and 119. 103. how much more should the Knowledge of the Gospel of Christ be so to us? When God gives this *Wisdom and Knowledge*, with it he gives *Joy* to him that is *good in his Sight*, Eccl. 3. 26.

I wonder what Pleasure or Satisfaction those can have in themselves, that are *ignorant* of God, and Christ, and another World, tho' they are told there is such a Knowledge to be had, and there are those that have it, and it is their continual Entertainment. But thus do Men stand in their own Light, when they *love Darknes rather than Light*.

Secondly, To be religious, is to *return to God, and repose in him as the Rest of our Souls*: And is not that pleasant? It is not only for our Understandings to embrace the Knowledge of him, but our Affections to fasten upon the Enjoyment of him: It is to *love God as our chief Good*, and to rest in that Love; to *love him with all our Heart, and Soul, and Mind, and Might*, who is well worthy of all that Love, and infinitely more; amiable in himself, gracious to us; who will accept our Love, and return it; who hath promis'd to *love those that love him*, Prov. 8. 17. The *Love of God* reigning in the Soul, (and that's

true

true Religion) is as much a *Satisfaction* to the Soul, as the *Love of the World* is a *Vexation* to it, when it comes to be reflected upon, and is found to be so ill bestow'd.

How *pleasant* must it needs be, so far to recover ourselves, as to quit the World for a Portion and Happiness as utterly insufficient to be so, and to depend upon him to be so, who has enough in him to answer our utmost Expectations? when we have in vain sought for Satisfaction where it is not to be had, to seek it and find it where it is? to come from doting upon *lying Vanities*, and spending our Money for that which is not Bread, Isa. 55. 2. to live, and live plentifully upon a God that is enough, a God all-sufficient, and in him to enjoy *our own Mercies*? Did ever any thing speak a Mind more easy and better pleas'd than that of *David*, *Return unto thy Rest, O my Soul?* Psal. 116. 7. to God as thy Rest, for in him I am where I would be, I have what I would have: Or that, Psal. 16. 2, 5, 6. *O my Soul, thou hast said unto the Lord, Thou art my Lord, the Portion of my Inheritance, and of my Cup? And then, The Lines are fallen to me in pleasant Places, and I have a goodly Heritage? Or that, Psal. 73. 25. Whom have I in Heaven but Thee, and there is none upon Earth that I desire in Comparison of Thee; for when Flesh and Heart fail, Thou art the Strength and Joy of my Heart, and my Portion for ever?*

We place not Religion in Raptures and Transports; but without doubt, holy Souls that are at home in God, that have made the *Most High their Habitation*, Psal. 91. 9. whose Desires are towards him, whose Delights are in him, who are in him as their Centre and Element, dwell at *Ease*. None can imagine the Pleasure that a Believer

liever has in his Covenant-Relation to God, and Interest in him, and the Assurance of his Love: Have I taken *thy Testimonies* to be *my Heritage for ever*? Psal. 119. 111. surely they are the *Rejoycing of my Heart*; I cannot be better provided for. When King *Asa* brought his People to renew their Covenant with God, it is said *they swore unto the Lord with a loud Voice, and with Shoutings, and with Trumpets*, 2 Chr. 15. 14, 15. *And all Judah rejoyced at the Oath, for they had sworn with all their Heart*. When we come to make it our own Act and Deed, to *joyn ourselves to the Lord in an everlasting Covenant*, and are upright with him in it, we cannot but be pleas'd with what we have done; 'tis a *Marriage-Covenant*, 'tis made with Joy; Cant. 2. 16. *My Beloved is mine, and I am his*.

Thirdly, To be religious, is to *come to God as a Father, in and by Jesus Christ as Mediator*. And is not this pleasant? We have not only the Pleasure of *knowing and loving God*, but the Pleasure of *drawing nigh to him*, and having by Faith a humble Freedom and Intimacy with him; Psal. 65. 4. *Blessed are they that dwell in his Courts, they shall be satisfy'd with the Goodness of his House, even of his holy Temple*. Religion is describ'd by *coming to God*; and what can be more agreeable to a Soul that comes *from him*?

'Tis to come to God as a Child to his Father, to his Father's House, to his Father's Arms, and to cry *Abba, Father*. To come as a Petitioner to his Prince, is a *Privilege*; but to come as a Child to his Father is a *Pleasure*; and this Pleasure have all the Saints, that have receiv'd the *Spirit of Adoption*. They can look up to the God that *made* them, as one that *loves* them, and as a tender *Compassion* for them, as a *Father*

ther has for his Children, Psal. 103. 13. and delights to do them Good, taking Pleasure in their Prosperity; as one whom tho' they have offended, yet is reconcil'd to them, owns them as his Children, and encourages them to call him Father. When he afflicts them, they know 'tis in Love, and for their Benefit, and that still it is their Father's good Pleasure to give them the Kingdom, Luke 12. 32. When Ephraim bemoan'd himself as a Bullock unaccustom'd to the Yoke, God bemoan'd him as a dear Son, as a pleasant Child, Jer. 31. 13, 20. And if even Prodigals when Penitents become pleasant Children to God, surely they have no Reason to be unpleasant to themselves.

But this is not all, 'tis not only to come to God as a Father, who himself loves us, John 16. 27. but it is to come to him in the Name of Jesus Christ, who is our Advocate with the Father; that by these two immutable things we might have strong Consolation, that we have not only a God to go to, but an Advocate to introduce us to him, and to speak for us. Believing in Christ is sometimes express'd by *rejoycing in him*; for it is a Complacency of Soul in the Methods which infinite Wisdom has taken, of bringing God and Man together by a Mediator. *We are the Circumcision that rejoyce in Christ Jesus*, Phil. 3. 3. not only rely upon him, but triumph in him. Paul is not only not asham'd of the Cross of Christ, but he glories in it, Gal. 6. 14. And when the Eunuch is brought to believe in Christ with all his Heart, he goes on his Way rejoycing, highly pleas'd with what he has done.

What a Pleasure, what a Satisfaction is it, to lodge the great Concerns of our Souls and Eternity (which, surely, we cannot but have some
careful

careful Thoughts about) in such a skilful faithful Hand as that of our Lord Jesus? And this we do by Faith. To cast the Burthen upon him who is able to save to the uttermost, and as willing as he is able, and thus to make ourselves easy? How is blessed Paul elevated at the Thought of this? Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that dy'd, yea, rather is risen again, Rom. 8. 34. And with what Pleasure doth he reflect upon the Confidence he had put in Jesus Christ? 2 Tim. 1. 12. I know whom I have believed, and he is able to keep that which I have committed to him against that Day. They that know what it is to be in Pain for Sin, and in Care to obtain the Favour of God, cannot but know what a Pleasure it is to believe in Christ as the Propitiation for our Sins, and our Intercessor with God.

How can we live a more pleasant Life, than to live by the Faith of the Son of God, Gal. 2. 20. to be continually depending on him, and deriving from him, and referring all to him; and as we have receiv'd him, so to walk in him? 'Tis in Believing that we are fill'd with Joy and Peace, Rom. 15. 13.

Fourthly, To be religious, is to enjoy God in all our Creature-Comforts; and is not that pleasant? It is to take the common Supports and Conveniences of Life, be they of the richest, or be they of the meanest, as the Products of his providential Care concerning us, and the Gifts of his Bounty to us, and in them to taste and see that the Lord is good, Psal. 34. 8. good to all, good to us. It is to look above second Causes to the first, through the Creature to the Creator, and to say concerning every thing that is agreeable and serviceable to us, This I ask'd, and this I have from the Hand of my heavenly Father.

What

What a noble Taste and Relish doth this put in; to all the Blessings with which we are daily loaded, our Health and Ease, our Rest and Sleep, our Food and Raiment, all the Satisfaction we have in our Relations, Peace in our Dwellings, Success in our Callings, the Sweetness of these is more than *doubled*, 'tis highly *rais'd*, when by our Religion we are taught and enabled to see them all coming to us from the Goodness of God, as our great Benefactor, and thus to *enjoy* them *richly*, 1 *Tim.* 6. 17. while those who look no further than the Creature, *enjoy* them very *poorly*, and but as the inferior-Creatures do.

Carnal irreligious People, tho' they take a greater *Liberty* in the Use of the Delights of Sense than good People dare take, and therein think they have the Advantage of them, yet I am confident they have not half the true *Delight* in them that good People have, not only because all Excesses are a Force upon Nature, and Surfeits are as painful as Hunger and Thirst, but because, tho' they do not thus abuse God's good Creatures, yet they deprive themselves of the Comfort of receiving them from their Father's Hand, because they are not affected to him as *obedient Children*. *They knew not that I gave them Corn, and Wine, and Oil*, Hosea 2. 8. They make use of the Creature, but, as in *Isa.* 22. 11. *They have not looked unto the Maker thereof, nor had Respect to him that fashion'd it long ago*, as good People do, and so they come short of the Pleasure which good People have.

Is it not pleasant to taste Covenant-Love in common Mercies? very pleasant to see the Hand of our heavenly Father spreading our Table, filling our Cup, making our Houses safe, and our Beds easy? This they do, that by Faith *have their Eyes*

Eyes ever towards the Lord, that by Prayer fetch in his Blessing upon all their Enjoyments, and by Praise give the Glory of them to that *Mercy* of his which *endureth for ever*. And when thus a continual Regard is had to that Mercy, an abundant *Sweetness* is thereby *infus'd* into all the Comforts of this Life; for as the *Wrath* and *Curse* of God is the *Wormwood* and the *Gall*, Lam. 3. 19. in all the *Afflictions* and *Miseries* of this Life, so his *Loving Kindness* is the *Honey* and *Oil* in all the Comforts and Enjoyments of this Life; that's it that is *better than Life*, Psal. 63. 3, 5. and which is *abundantly satisfying*; which *puts Gladness into the Heart beyond the Joy of Harvest*, Psal. 4. 6, 7. Then the *Nations* are glad, and *sing for Joy*, when not only the *Earth yields her Increase*, but with it God, even *their own God*, gives them his *Blessing*, Psal. 67. 4, 6. And when the Church is brought to such a Sense of God's Grace, as to cry out, *How great is his Goodness, and how great is his Beauty*, Zach. 9. 17. it follows that then *Corn shall make the young Men chearful*, intimating that we have no joy of our Enjoyments, no true Joy of them, till we are led by these Streams to the Fountain. *To the Pure, all things are pure*, Tit. 1. 14. and the more pure they are, the more pleasant they are.

Fifthly, To be Religious, is to *cast all our Cares upon God*, and to *commit all our Ways and Works to him*, with an *Assurance* that he will care for us. And is not this pleasant? 'Tis a very sensible Pleasure to be eas'd of some pressing Burthen which we are ready to sink under; and Care is such a Burthen: 'Tis a *Heaviness in the Heart of Man*, which *maketh it to stoop*. Now true Religion enables us to *acknowledge God in all our Ways*, Prov. 3. 6. and then depend upon him to
direct

direct our Steps, and follow his Directions, not leaning to our own Understanding: It is to refer ourselves, and the Disposal of every thing that concerns us in this World, to God, and to his Will and Wisdom, with an intire Acquiescence in his Award and Arbitration; Here I am, let the Lord do with me as seemeth good in his Eyes, 2 Sam. 15. 26.

To be truly *godly*, is to have our Wills melted into the Will of God in every thing, and to say *Amen* to it, not only as a *Prayer*, but as a *Covenant*; *Father in Heaven, thy Will be done; not as I will, but as thou wilt.* 'Tis to be fully reconcil'd to all the Disposals of the Divine Providence, and Methods of Divine Grace, both concerning others and ourselves: To be satisfy'd that *all is well that God doth*, and will appear so at last when the *Mystery of God* shall be *finished*. And how doth the Mind enjoy itself that is come to this! How easy is it! 'Tis not only *freed* from racking Anxieties, but fill'd with *pleasing* Prospects: Fears are hereby silenc'd, and Hopes kept up and elevated. Nothing can come amiss to those, who have thus been taught by the Principles of their Religion to *make the best of that which is*, because it is the Will of God; which is *making a Virtue of Necessity*.

What *uncomfortable* Lives do they live, that are continually *fretting* at that which cannot be *help'd*, quarrelling with the Disposals of Providence, when they cannot *alter* them, and thus by contracting Guilt as well as by indulging Grief, doubling every Burthen? But how *pleasantly* do they travel through the Wilderness of this World, that constantly *follow the Pillar of Cloud and Fire*, and accommodate themselves to their Lot, whatever it is? That like *Paul*, thro'
Christ

Christ strengthening them, have learn'd *in every Estate to be content, know how to want, and how to abound?* Phil. 4. 11, 12, 13.

Religion brings the *Mind* to the *Condition*, whatever it is, and so makes it easy, because the *Condition*, tho' it be not in every thing to our *Mind*, it is according to God's *Mind*, who in all Occurrences *performeth the thing that is appointed for us*, Job. 23. 14. and will make all *work for good to them that love him*. When the Psalmist had directed us to *delight ourselves always in the Lord*, Psal. 37. 4, 5. that is, to make our Religion a constant Pleasure to ourselves, he directs us in order thereunto to *commit our Way unto the Lord*, to *trust also in him* that he will *bring it to pass*, so as that we shall have the *Desire of our Heart*. And when St. Paul had encourag'd us to be *careful for nothing*, but in *every thing to make our Requests known to God*, he assures us, that if we do so, *the Peace of God, which passeth all Understanding, shall keep our Hearts and Minds*, Phil. 4. 6, 7.

Sixthly, To be religious, is to *rejoyce in the Lord always*, Phil. 3. 1. and 4. 4. And is not that pleasant? It is not only one of the *Privileges* of our Religion that we may rejoyce, but it is made one of the *Duties* of it: We are defective in our Religion, if we do not live a *Life of Complacency* in God, in his Being, his Attributes, and Relations to us. It should be a constant Pleasure to us, to think that there is a God; that he is such a one as the Scripture has reveal'd him to be, a Being infinitely wise and powerful, holy, just, and good; that this God governs the World, and gives Law to all the Creatures; that he is our Owner and Ruler; that in his Hand our Breath is, in his Hand our Times, our Hearts,
and

and all our Ways are. Thus certainly it *is*, and thus it *must be*, and happy they that can *please* themselves with these Thoughts; as those must needs be a constant Terror to themselves, who could with it were otherwise.

They who thus *delight in God* have always something, and something very commanding too, to *delight in*; a Fountain of Joy that can never be either *exhausted* or *stopp'd up*, and to which they may always have Access. How few are there that *live many Days*, and *rejoyce in them all*! Eccles. 11. 8. Such a thing is *suppos'd* indeed, but it is never *found true* in any, but those that make God their Joy, the *Gladness of their Joy*, as the Psalmist expresth it, Psal. 43. 4. their *exceeding Joy*; and in him it is intended the Joy should terminate, when we are bid to *rejoyce evermore*, 1 Thes. 5. 16.

The *Conversion* of the Nations to Christ, and his holy Religion, is often prophesied of in the Old Testament, under the Notion of their being brought into a State of *holy Joy*; Psal. 96. 11. and 97. 1. and 100. 1. *Let the Earth rejoyce that the Lord reigns*, and *let the Multitude of Isles be glad thereof*; *rejoyce ye Gentiles with his People*. The Gospel is *glad Tydings of great Joy to all People*, Rom. 15. 10. When *Samaria* receiv'd the Gospel, *there was great Joy in that City*, Acts 8. 8. so essential is Joy to Religion.

And the *Conversation* of those that are joyn'd to the Lord, when it is as it should be, is *cheerful* and *joyful*: They are call'd upon to *walk in the Light of the Lord*, Psal. 138. 5. and to *sing in the Ways of the Lord*, Isa. 2. 5. and to *serve the Lord their God with Joyfulness and Gladness of Heart in the abundance of all things*, Deut. 28. 47. yea, and in the want of all things too, Hab.

3. 17. *Tho' the Fig-tree do not blossom, and there be no Fruit in the Vine: Has God now accepted thee, and thy Works in Jesus Christ, Go thy Way, eat thy Bread with Joy, and drink thy Wine with a merry Heart,* Eccl. 9. 7. It is the Will of God that his People should be a chearful People, that his Israel should *rejoyce in every good thing which the Lord their God giveth them,* Deut. 26. 11. so that it is their own Fault if they have not a *continual Feast*, and be not made to *rejoyce with the Out-goings of every Morning and every Evening*; for the *Compassions* of that God in whom they rejoyce, are not only *constant*, but *new and fresh* daily.

Seventhly, To be religious, is to *make a Business of praising God*: And is not that pleasant? It is indeed very *unpleasant*, and much against the Grain, to be oblig'd continually to *praise* one that is not *worthy of Praise*; but what can be more pleasant, than to *praise him* to whom all Praise is due, and *ours* particularly? to whom we and all the Creatures lie under all possible *Obligations*; who is *worthy of*, and yet exalted *far above* all Blessing and Praise; *from whom* all things are, and therefore *to whom* all things ought to be?

There is little *Pleasure* in *praising* one, whom none praise that are wise and good, but only the *Fools in Israel*: But in praising God we *concur* with the blessed Angels in Heaven, and all the Saints, and do it in *consort* with them, who the more they know him, the more they praise him. *Bless the Lord, ye his Angels, and all his Hosts*; and therefore, with what Pleasure can I cast in my Mite into such a Treasury, *Bless the Lord, O my Soul*?

There

There is little Pleasure in praising one, who will not regard our Praises, nor take Notice of our Expressions of Esteem and Affection: But when we *offer to God the Sacrifice of Praise continually*, (according to the Obligation which our Religion lays upon us) that is the *Fruit of our Lips giving Thanks to his Name*, Heb. 13. 15. we offer it to one that takes Notice of it, accepts it, is well pleas'd with it, smells a *Savour of Rest* from it, Gen. 8. 21. and will not fail to meet those with his Mercies, that follow him with their Praises; for he hath said, that they that *offer Praise glorify him*; such a favourable Construction doth he put upon it, and such a high Stamp upon coarse Metal.

Now what is it that we have to do in Religion but to *praise God*? We are taken into Covenant with God, that we should be to him *for a Name, and for a Praise*, Jer. 13. 11. are called into his *marvellous Light*, that we should *shew forth the Praises of him that called us*, 1 Pet. 2. 9. And how can we be more comfortably employ'd? They are therefore *blessed, that dwell in God's House, for they will be still praising him*, Psal. 84. 4. And it is a good thing, good in it self, and good for us; 'tis very pleasant to *give Thanks unto the Lord*, and to *shew forth his Praises*, Psal. 135. 3. and 92. 1. for we cannot do ourselves a greater Honour, or fetch in a greater Satisfaction, than by *giving unto the Lord the Glory due unto his Name*: It is not only a Heaven upon Earth, but it is a Pledge and Earnest of a Heaven in Heaven too; for if we be here *every Day blessing God*, Psal. 145. 2. we shall be *praising him for ever and ever*; for thus all that shall go to Heaven hereafter, begin their Heaven now. Compare the hellish Pleasure which some take in pro-
faning

faning the Name of God, and the heavenly Pleasure which others take in glorifying it, and tell me which is preferable.

Eighthly, To be religious, is to have all our inordinate Appetites corrected and regulated: And is not that pleasant? To be eas'd from Pain is a sensible Pleasure, and to be eas'd from that which is the Disease and Disorder of the Mind is a mental Pleasure. Those certainly live a most unpleasant uncomfortable Life, that are Slaves to their Appetites, and indulge themselves in the Gratifications of Sense tho' never so criminal; that lay the Reins in the Neck of their Lusts, and withhold not their Hearts from any Joy. The Drunkards and Unclean, tho' they are said to give themselves to their Pleasures, yet really they estrange themselves from that which is true Pleasure, and subject themselves to a continual Pain and Uneasiness.

The Carnal Appetite is often overcharg'd, and that's a Burthen to the Body, and its Distemper: When enough is as good as a Feast, I wonder what Pleasure it can be to take more than enough; and the Appetite the more it is indulg'd, the more humoursome and troublesome it grows; 'tis surfeited but not satisfied; it doth but grow more impetuous and more imperious. 'Tis true of the Body, what Solomon says of a Servant, Prov. 29. 21. *He that delicately bringeth up his Servant from a Child, shall have him become his Son, nay his Master, at the length.* If we suffer the Body to get Dominion over the Soul, so that the Interests of the Soul must be damag'd to gratify the Inclinations of the Body, it will be a Tyrant, as a Usurper generally is, and will rule with Rigour: And as God said to the People, 1 Sam. 8. 18. when by Samuel he had shew'd them

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them *the Manner of the King* that they chose, when they rejected his Government, *You will cry out in that Day because of your King which ye have chosen you, and the Lord will not bear; so it is with those that bring themselves into Disorders, Diseases, and Terrors by the Indulgence of their Lusts; who can pity them? they are well enough serv'd for setting such a King over them. Who hath Woe? Who hath Sorrow? Prov. 23. 29. None so much as they that tarry long at the Wine, tho' they think themselves to have the Monopoly of Pleasure. The Truth is, they that live in these Pleasures are dead while they live, 1 Tim. 5. 6. and while they fancy themselves to take the greatest Liberty, really find themselves in the greatest Slavery; for they are led Captive by Satan at his Will, 2 Pet. 2. 19. and of whom a Man is overcome, of the same is he brought in Bondage.*

And if the Carnal Appetite have not gain'd such a compleat Possession, as quite to extinguish all the Remains of *Reason and Conscience*; those noble Powers, since they are not permitted to give *Law*, will give *Disturbance*; and there are few that have so full an Enjoyment of the forbidden Pleasures of Sense, but that they sometimes feel the Checks of Reason, and the Terrors of Conscience, which marr their Mirth, as the Hand-writing on the Wall did *Belshazzar's*, and make their Lives uncomfortable to them, and *justly so*, which makes them the *more so*.

Now to be religious, is to have the *exorbitant* Power of those Lusts and Appetites broken, and since they will not be *satisfy'd*, to have them *mortify'd*, and brought into a quiet Submission to the commanding Faculties of the Soul, according to the Direction of the Divine Law; and thus the
Peace

Peace is preserv'd, by supporting good Order and Government in the Soul.

Those certainly live the most easy, healthful, pleasant Lives, that are most sober, temperate, and chaste; that allow not themselves to eat of any forbidden Tree, tho' *pleasant to the Eye*; that live regularly, and are the Masters, not the Servants, of *their own Bellies*, 2 Cor. 9. 27. that *keep under their Bodies, and bring them into Subjection* to Religion and right Reason; and by laying the Axe to the Root, and breaking *vicious Habits*, Dispositions, and Desires, in the Strength of Divine Grace have made the refraining of *vicious Acts* very easy and pleasant. Rom. 8. 13. If thro' *the Spirit* we mortify the Deeds of the Body, we live, we live pleasantly.

Ninthly, To be religious, is to have all our unruly Passions likewise govern'd and subdu'd: And is not that pleasant? Much of our Torment ariseth from our intemperate Heats, *Discontent* at the Providence of God, *Fretfulness* at every cross Occurrence, *Fear* of every imaginary Evil, *Envy* at those that are in better State than ourselves, *Malice* against those that have injur'd us, and an *angry Resentment* of every the least Provocation: These are Thorns and Briars in the Soul; these spoil all our Enjoyments, both of ourselves, and of our Friends, and of our God too; these make Mens Lives *unpleasant*, and them a Terror to themselves, and to all about them.

But when by the Grace of God these *Roots of Bitterness* are pluck'd up, which bear so much *Gall and Wormwood*, and we have learn'd of our Master to be *meek and lowly in Heart*, Mat. 11. 29. we find *Rest to our Souls*, we enter into the *pleasant Land*. There is scarce any of the Graces of a Christian, that have more of a present Tranquility

lity and Satisfaction, both inherent in them, and annexed to them, than this of *Meekness*. *The Meek shall eat, and be satisfy'd*; Psalm. 22. 26. they shall *inherit the Earth*; Mat. 5. 5. they shall *delight themselves in the Abundance of Peace*; Psal. 37. 11. and they shall *encrease their Joy in the Lord*, Isa. 29. 19. which nothing diminisheth more than *ungovern'd Passion*; for that grieves the Spirit of Grace, the Comforter, and provokes him to withdraw, *Eph. 4. 30, 31*.

How pleasant is it, for a Man to be Master of his own Thoughts, to have a Calmness and Serenity in his own Mind, as those have, that have *Rule over their own Spirits*, and thereby are *kept in Peace*. Peace, that will break an angry Man's Heart, that will not break a meek Man's Sleep.

Tenthly, To be Religious, is to *dwell in Love to all our Brethren*, and *to do all the Good we can in this World*: And is not that pleasant? Love is the *Fulfilling of the Law*; 'Tis the second great Commandment to *Love our Neighbour as our selves*, Rom. 13. 10. All our Duty is sum'd up in one Word, which as it is a short Word, so it is a sweet Word, *Love*. Behold *how good, and how pleasant it is to live in holy Love*; Psal. 133. 1. 'tis not only pleasing to God, and amiable in the Eyes of all good Men, but it will be very comfortable to our selves; for they that *dwell in Love, dwell in God, and God in them*, 1 John 4. 16.

Religion teacheth us to be easy to our Relations, and to *please them well in all Things*, neither to *give*, nor *resent* Provocations, to bear with their Infirmities, to be courteous and obliging to all with whom we converse; to keep our Temper, and the Possession and Enjoyment of our own Souls, whatever Affronts are given us; And can
any

any Thing contribute more to our *Living pleasantly?*

By Love we enjoy our *Friends*, and have Communion with them in all their Comforts, and so add to our own; *Rejoycing with them that do rejoyce* 1. Thes. 3. 9. By Love we recommend ourselves to their Love, and what more delightful than to love, and be belov'd? Love is the very Element of a pure and sanctify'd Mind, the sweet Air it breaths in, the *Cement* of the best *Society*, which Contributes so much to the Pleasure of Human Life. The Sheep of Christ united in Flocks by the Bond of Holy Love, lye down together in the *Green Pastures* by the *Still Waters*, where there is not only *Plenty*, but *Pleasure*. The Apostle exhorting his Friends to *be of good Comfort*, 2 Cor. 13. 11. and to go on chearfully in their Christian Course, exhorts them, in order to that, to *be of one Mind and to live in Peace*, and then *the God of Love and Peace will be with them*.

And what *Pleasure* comparable to that of *Doing good*? 'Tis some Participation of the Pleasure of the Eternal Mind, who *delights to shew Mercy*, and to *do good*; Nay, besides the *Divinity* of this Pleasure, there is a *Humanity* in it; the Nature of Man, if it be not debauch'd and vitiated, cannot but take Pleasure in making any Body *safe and easy*. It was a *Pleasure* to Job, to think that he had *caus'd the Widows Heart to sing for Joy*, had been *Eyes to the Blind*, and *Feet to the Lamé*, and a *Father to the Poor*. and that they had been *warm'd with the Fleece of his Sheep*. Job 29. 13, 15, 16. and 31. 20. The Pleasure that a good Man hath in doing good, confirms that Saying of our Saviour's, That *it is more blessed to give, than to receive*, Acts 20, 25.

Ele venthly, To be Religious, is to live a *Life of Communion with God*: And is not that pleasant?

Good

Good Christians being taken into Friendship, have *Fellowship with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ*, 1 John 3. 3. and make it their Business to keep up that Holy Converse and Correspondence. Herein consists the *Life of Religion*, to converse with God, to receive his Communications of Mercy and Grace to us, and to return Pious and Devout Affections to him; And can any Life be more comfortable? Is there any Conversation, that can possibly be so pleasant as this to a Soul that knows it self, and its own Powers and Interests?

In *Reading and Meditating upon the Word of God*, we hear God speaking to us with a great deal of Condescension to us, and Concern for us, speaking freely to us, as a Man doth to his Friend, and about our own Business, speaking comfortably to us in Compassion to our distressful Case; and what can be more pleasant to those who have a Value for the Favour of God, and are in Care about the Interests of their own Souls; Psal. 141. 6. *When their Judges are overthrown in Stony Places, they shall hear my Words for they are sweet*; the Words of God will be very sweet to those who see themselves overthrown by Sin, and so they will be to all that love God; with what an Air of Pleasure doth the Spouse say, *It is the Voice of my Beloved, and he speaks to me?* Cant. 2. 8, 10.

In *Prayer and Praise we speak to God*, and we have *Liberty of Speech*, have leave to utter all our Words before the Lord, as *Jephthah* did his in *Mizpeh*, Jud. 11. 11. we speak to one whose Ear is open, is bow'd to our Prayers, nay to whom the *Prayer of the Upright* is a *Delight*, Prov. 15. 8. which cannot but make it very much a Delight to them to Pray. 'Tis not only an ease to a bur-

then'd Spirit to unbosom it self to such a Friend as God is, but a *Pleasure* to a Soul that knows its own Extraction, to have such a *Boldness*, as all Believers have, to *enter into the Holiest*.

Nay, we may as truly have *Communion with God* in *Providences* as in *Ordinances*, and in the *Duties of Common Conversation*, as in *Religious Exercises*; and thus that *Pleasure* may become a *Continual Feast* to our Souls. What can be more pleasant, than to have a God to go to, whom we may *acknowledge in all our Ways*, and whom our *Eyes are ever towards*; Psal. 25. 15. to see all our Comforts coming to us from his Hand, and all our Crosses too; to refer our selves and all Events that are concerning us to his Dispose, with an Assurance that he will order all for the best? What a *Pleasure* is it, to *behold the Beauty of the Lord* in all his *Works*; and to *taste the Goodness of the Lord* in all his *Gifts*, in all our Expectations to see every *Man's Judgment proceeding from him*; to make God our Hope, and God our Fear, and God our Joy, and God our Life, and God our All? This is to live a Life of Communion with God.

Twelfthly, To be Religious, is to *keep up a constant believing Prospect of the Glory to be reveal'd*: It is to set *Eternal Life* before us as the Mark we aim at, and the *Prize* we run for, and to *seek the Things that are Above*, Col. 3. 1. And is not this pleasant? It is our Duty to *think much of Heaven*, to place our Happiness in its Joys, and thitherward to direct our *Aims and Pursuits*; And what *Subject*, what *Object* can be more *pleasing*! We have need, sometimes, to *frighten our selves from Sin*, with the *Terrors of Eternal Death*; But it is much more a Part of our Religion, to *encourage our selves in our Duty*, with

with the *Hopes* of that *Eternal Life* which God hath given us, that *Life which is in his Son*. 1 John 5. 11.

What is Christianity, but *having our Conversation in Heaven*, Phil. 3. 20. trading with the New *Jerusalem*, and keeping up a constant Correspondence with that *Better Country, that is the Heavenly*, as the Country we *belong to*, and are in *Expectation of*, to which we remit our best Effects and best Affections; where our Head and Home is, and where we *hope and long to be*.

Then we are as we *should be*, when our Minds are in a Heavenly Frame and Temper; then we *do as we should do*, when we are employ'd in the Heavenly Work, as we are capable of doing it in this lower World, and is not our Religion then a *Heaven upon Earth*? If there be a *Fulness of Joy and Pleasure* in that *Glory and Happiness*, which is *Grace and Holiness* perfected; there cannot but be an Abundance of Joy and Pleasure in that *Grace and Holiness*, which is *Glory and Happiness* begun. If there will be such a compleat Satisfaction in *Vision and Fruition*, there cannot but be a great deal in *Faith and Hope*, so well founded, as that of the Saints is. Hence we are said, *Believing to rejoice with Joy unspeakable*, 1 Pet. 1. 8. and to be *fill'd with Joy and Peace in Believing*, Rom. 15. 13.

It is the Character of all God's People, that they are *born from Heaven*, and *bound for Heaven*, and have *laid up their Treasure in Heaven*; and they that know how great, how rich, how glorious, and how well secur'd, that Happiness is to all Believers, cannot but own, that if that be their Character, it cannot but be their unspeakable Comfort and Delight.

Now lay all this together, and then tell me, whether Religion be not a *pleasant thing indeed*, when

even the *Duties* of it themselves are so much the *Delights* of it; And whether we do not serve a good Master, who has thus made our Work its own Wages, and has graciously provided *Two Heavens* for those, that never deserv'd *One*.



C H A P. III.

The Pleasantness of Religion prov'd, from the Provision that is made for the Comfort of those that are Religious, and the Privileges they are entitled to.

WE have already found by *Enquiry*, (O! that we could all say, we had found by *Experience*!) that the very *Principles* and *Practices* of Religion themselves have a great deal of Pleasantness in them, and the one half of that has not been told us; and yet the Comfort that attends Religion, and follows after it, cannot but exceed that which is *inherent* in it, and comes *with it*. If the *Work of Righteousness* be *Peace*, much more is the *Effect of Righteousness* so, Isa. 32. 17. If the *Precepts* of Religion have such an Air of sweetness in them, what then have the *Comforts* of it? Behold *Happy is the People*, even in this World, *whose God is the Lord*.

We must conclude, that they that walk in the *Ways of Holy Wisdom*, have, or may have, true *Peace* and *Pleasure*; for God hath both *taken care* for their Comfort, and given them *Cause* to be comforted, so that if they do not live *easily* and *pleasantly*, it is their own Fault.

First, The God whom they serve, hath, in general, *taken care* for their Comfort, and has done enough

enough to convince them, that it is his Will they should be comforted; that he not only gives them *Leave* to be *cheerful*, but would have them to be so; for what could have been done more to the Satisfaction of his Family, then he has done in it?

1. There is a *Purchase made* of Peace and Pleasure for them, so that they come to it *fairly*, and by a good Title. He that purchas'd them a *peculiar People* to himself, took care they should be a *Pleasant People*, that their Comforts might be a Credit to his Cause, and the Joy of his Servants in his Work might be a Reputation to his Family. We have not only *Peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ*, Rom. 5. 1, 2, 3. but *Peace* in our own Consciencies too; not only *Peace above*, but *Peace within*; and nothing less will *pacify* an offended Conscience, than that which *satisfy'd* an offended God. Yet this is not all, we have not only inward *Peace*, but we *rejoyce in Hope of the Glory of God*, and triumph over, nay, we *triumph in Tribulation*.

Think what a vast Expence (if I may so say) God was at, of Blood and Treasure, to lay up for us, and secure to us, not only a future Bliss, but present Pleasure, and the Felicities not only of our Home, but of our Way. Christ had *Trouble*, that we might have *Peace*; *Pain*, that we might have *Pleasure*; *Sorrow*, that we might have *Joy*. He wore the *Crown of Thorns*, that he might Crown us with *Roses*, and a lasting Joy might be *upon our Heads*. He put on the *Spirit of Heaviness*, that we might be array'd with the *Garments of Praise*. The Garden was the Place of his Agony, that it might be to us a *Garden of Eden*, and there it was, that he *indented* with his Prosecutors for the Disciples, upon his Surrendring himself, saying in Effect to all Agonies,

as he did to them, *If ye seek me let these go their Way*, John 18. 8. If I be resign'd to Trouble, let them depart in Peace.

This was that which made *Wisdom's Ways Pleasantness*, the *everlasting Righteousness* which Christ, by dying, wrought out, and brought in. This is the Foundation of the Treaty of Peace, and consequently the Fountain of all those Consolations, which Believers are happy in. Then it is, That *all the Seed of Israel glory*, when they can each of them say, *In the Lord have I Righteousness and Strength*, Isa. 45. 24, 25. and then *Israel shall dwell safely*, in a holy Security, when they have learned to call Christ by this Name, *The Lord our Righteousness*, Jerem. 23. 6. If Christ had not gone to the Father, as our High Priest, with the Blood of sprinkling in his Hand, we could never have *Rejoyc'd*, but must have been always Trembling.

Christ is our Peace, Eph. 2. 14, 17. not only as he made Peace for us with God, but as he preached to them that were afar off, and to them that were nigh; and has engag'd, that his People, whenever they may have Trouble in the World, shall have Peace in him, John 16. 33. upon the Assurance of which, they may be of good Cheer, whatever happens. It is observable, that in the Close of that Ordinance, which Christ instituted, in the Night wherein he was betrayed, to be a Memorial of his Sufferings, he both sung a Hymn of Joy, and preached a Sermon of Comfort, to intimate, that that which he design'd in Dying for us, was to give us *everlasting Consolation, and good Hope through Grace*, 2 Thes. 2. 16. and that we should aim at, in all our Commemorations of his Death.

Peace and Comfort are bought, and paid for; If any of those who were design'd to have the Benefit

nefit of this Purchase, deprive themselves of it, let them bear the blame, but let him have the Praise who intended them the Kindness; and who will take care, that tho' his Kindness be *defer'd*, it shall not be *defeated*; for tho' his Disciples may be sorrowful for a time, *their Sorrow shall be turned into Joy*, John 16. 20.

2. There are *Promises made* to Believers of *Peace* and *Pleasure*; the Benefits Christ bought for them are *convey'd* to them, and *settled* upon them in the Covenant of Grace; which is *well-order'd in all Things*, 2 Sam. 23. 5. for the Comfort and Satisfaction of those, who have made that Covenant *all their Salvation, and all their Desire*. There it is, that *Light is sown for the Righteous*, and it will come up again in due time; The Promises of that Covenant are the *Wells of Salvation*, out of which they *draw Water with Joy*; the *Breasts of Consolation*, out of which, by Faith, they *suck, and are satisfy'd*, Isa. 22. 3. and 16. 12.

The Promises of the Old Testament, that point at Gospel Times, speak mostly of this as the Blessing reserv'd for those Times, that there should be great *Joy* and *Rejoycing*; Isa. 35. 1. and 60. 1. *The Desert shall rejoyce, and blossom as the Rose; Arise, shine, for thy Light is come*; for the Design of the Gospel was to make Religion a more *pleasant* thing than it had been, by freeing it both from the *burthensome Services* which the Jews were under, and from the *superstitious Fears*, which the *Heathen* kept themselves, and one another in Awe with; and by enlarging the *Privileges* of God's People, and making them easier to *come at*.

Every particular Believer is *interested* in the Promises made to the Church, and may put them in Suit, and fetch in the Comfort contained in

them, as every Citizen has the Benefit of the Charter, even the meanest. What a Pleasure may one take in applying such a Promise as that, *I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee?* Or that, *All things shall work for good to them that love God?* These, and such as these, guide our Feet in the Ways of Peace; and as they are a firm Foundation on which to build our Hopes, so they are a full Fountain from which to draw our Joys. By the exceeding great and precious Promises, we partake of a Divine Nature, 2 Pet.

1. 4. of this Instance of it as much as any, a comfortable Enjoyment of our selves, and by all the other Promises that Promise is fulfill'd, Isa. 65. 14, 15. *My Servants shall eat, but ye shall be hungry; my Servants shall drink, but ye shall be thirsty; my Servants shall rejoyce, but ye shall be ashamed; my Servants shall sing for Joy of Heart, but ye shall cry for Sorrow of Heart;* And the Encouragement given to all the Churches faithful Friends is made good, *Rejoyce ye with Jerusalem, and be glad with her all ye that love her,* Isa. 66. 10.

3. There is Provision made for the Application of that which is purchas'd, and promis'd to the Saints. What will it avail, that there is Wine in the Vessel, if it be not drawn out? That there is a Cordial made up, if it be not administer'd? Care is therefore taken, that the People of God be assisted, in making use of the Comforts treasur'd up for them in the Everlasting Covenant.

A Religious Life, one may well expect, should be a very comfortable Life, for infinite Wisdom has devis'd all the Means that could be to make it so; *What could have been done more for God's Vineyard,* Isa. 5. 4. *to make it flourishing as well as fruitful,* than what he has done in it? There is not only an over-flowing Fulness of Oil in the

Good

Good Olive, but *Golden Pipes* (as in the Prophet's Vision, *Zech.* 4. 12.) for the Conveyance of that Oil to the Lamps, to keep them burning. When God would himself furnish a Paradise for a beloved Creature, there was nothing wanting that might contribute to the Comfort of it; in it was planted *Every Tree that was pleasant to the Sight and good for Food*, *Gen.* 2. 8, 9. So in the Gospel there is a Paradise planted, for all the faithful Off-spring of the second *Adam*: A *Canaan*, a Land *flowing with Milk and Honey*, a *pleasant Land*, a *Rest* for all the spiritual Seed of *Abraham*: Now as God put *Adam* into Paradise, and brought *Israel* into *Canaan*, so he has provided for the *Giving of Possession* to all Believers, of all that Comfort and Pleasure that is laid up for them. As in the Garden of *Eden*, Innocency and Pleasure were twisted together, so in the Gospel of Christ, Grace and Peace, *Righteousness and Peace have kissed each other*, *Psal.* 85. 10. and all is done that could be wish'd, in order to our *entring into this Rest*, this blessed *Sabbatism*, *Heb.* 4. 3, 9. So that if we have not the Benefit of it, we may thank our selves, God would have comforted us, and we would not be comforted, our Souls refused it.

Four Things are done with this View, that those who live a Godly Life, may live a comfortable pleasant Life; and 'tis Pity they should receive the Grace of God herein in vain.

(1.) The *Blessed Spirit* is sent to be the *Comforter*; He doth also enlighten, convince, and sanctify, but he hath his Name from this Part of his Office, *John* 14. 16. he is *ὁ παρακλητὴς*, *The Comforter*. As the *Son of God* was sent to be the *Consolation of Israel*, *Luke* 2. 25. to provide *Matter for Comfort*, so the *Spirit of God* was

sent to be the *Comforter*, to apply the Consolation which the Lord Jesus has provided. Christ came to *make Peace*, and the Spirit to *speak Peace*, and to *make us to bear Joy and Gladness*, even such as will cause *broken Bones* themselves to *rejoice*, Psal. 51. 8. Christ having wrought out the Salvation for us, the Work of the Spirit is to give us the Comfort of it; Hence the Joy of the Saints is said to be the *Joy of the Holy Ghost*, 1 Thes. 1. 6. because it is his Office to administer such Comforts, as tend to the filling of us with Joy.

God by his Spirit *moving on the Face of the Waters*, made the World according to the Word of his Power; And by his Spirit moving on the Souls of his People, even when they are a perfect *Chaos*, he *creates the Fruit of the Lips, Peace*, Isa. 57. 19. the Product of the word of his Promise; and if he did not *create* it, it would never be; and we must not only attend to the Word of God speaking to us, but submit to the Spirit of God working upon us with the Word.

The Spirit as a *Comforter*, was given not only for the Relief of the Saints in the *suffering Ages* of the Church, but to continue with the Church *always to the End*, for the Comfort of Believers in reference to their constant Sorrows both *Temporal* and *Spiritual*; And what a Favour is this to the Church, no less needful, no less advantageous than the Sending of the Son of God to save us, and for which, therefore, we should be no less thankful. Let this Article never be left out of our Songs of Praise; but let us always give Thanks to him, who not only sent his Son to *make Satisfaction for us*, for his *Mercy endureth for ever*, but sent his Spirit to give *Satisfaction to us*, for his *Mercy endureth for ever*; sent his Spirit not only to *work in us the Disposition of Children towards him*,

him, but also to *witness* to our Adoption, and *seal us to the Day of Redemption*.

The Spirit is given to be *our Teacher*, and to *lead us into all Truth*, and as such he is a Comforter; for by rectifying our Mistakes, and setting things in a *true Light*, he silenceth our Doubts and Fears, and sets things in a *Pleasant Light*. The Spirit is our *Remembrancer*, to put us in Mind of that which we do know, and as such he is a *Comforter*; for like the Disciples, we distrust Christ in every Exigence, because we *forget the Miracles of the Loaves*, Mat. 16. 9. The Spirit is our *Sanctifier*; by him Sin is mortified, and Grace wrought, and strengthen'd, and as such he is our *Comforter*; for nothing tends so much to make us *Easy*, as that which tends to make us *Holy*. The Spirit is our *Guide*, and we are said to be *led by the Spirit*, and as such he is our *Comforter*; for under his Conduct, we cannot but be led into *Ways of Pleasantness*, to the *green Pastures*, and *still Waters*.

(2.) The *Scriptures* are written that our Joy may be full, 1 John 1. 4. that we may have that Joy which alone is *filling*, and hath that in it, which will fill up the Vacancies of other Joys, and make up their Deficiencies; And that we may be *full of that Joy*; may have more and more of it, may be wholly taken up with it, and may come, at length, to the full Perfection of it in the Kingdom of Glory: *These things are written to you*, not only that you may *receive the Word with Joy*, at first, when it's a new thing to you, but that *your Joy may be full*, and constant. The Word of God is the *main Pipe*, by which Comfort is convey'd from Christ, the Fountain of Life, to all the Saints. That Book, which the *Lamb that was slain*, took
out

out of the *Right Hand* of him that *sate on the Throne*, is that which we are by Faith to feed upon and digest, and to fill our Souls with; and we shall find that it will, like *Ezekiel's Roll*, *Ezek. 3. 3. be in our Mouths as Honey for Sweetness*; and the Opening of its Seals will put a new Song into our Mouth, *Rev. 5. 9.*

Scripture Light is pleasant, much more sweet, more pleasant, than for the Eyes to behold the Sun; the manner of its Conveyance is such, as makes it abundantly more so, for God speaks to us *after the manner of Men*, in our own Language. The Comforts which the Scripture speaks to us, are the *sure Mercies of David*, such as we may depend upon; and it is continually speaking; The Scriptures we may have *always with us*, and whenever we will, we may have Recourse to them; so that we need not be to seek for Cordials at any time! The Word is nigh thee, *Rom. 10. 8.* in thy House, and in thy Hand, and 'tis thy own fault if it be not in thy Mouth, and in thy Heart. Nor is it a Spring shut up, or a Fountain seal'd; those that compare *Spiritual Things with Spiritual*, will find the Scripture its own Interpreter, and spiritual Pleasure to flow from it as easily, as plentifully, to all that have Spiritual Senses exercised, as the Honey from the Comb.

All the Saints have found Pleasure in the Word of God, and those who have given up themselves to be led, and rul'd by it. 'Twas such a Comfort to David in his Distress, that if he had not had that for his Delight, he should have perished in his Affliction, *Psal. 119. 92.* nay, he had the Joy of God's Word to be his continual Entertainment, *Psal. 119. 54. Thy Statutes have been my Songs in the House of my Pilgrimage: — Thy Words were sound*, saith Jeremiah, and I did Eat them, feast upon

upon them with as much Pleasure, as ever any Hungry Man did upon his necessary Food, or *Epicure* upon his Dainties; I perfectly regal'd my self with them; and *thy Word was unto me the Joy and rejoycing of my Heart*, Jer. 15. 16. and we not only come short of their Experiences, but frustrate God's gracious Intentions, if we do not find Pleasure in the Word of God; for *whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our Learning, that we through Patience and Comfort of the Scriptures, might have Hope*, Rom. 15. 4.

(3.) *Holy Ordinances* were instituted for the Furtherance of our Comfort, and to make our Religion *Pleasant* unto us. The Conversation of Friends with each other is reckon'd one of the greatest Delights of this World; now Ordinances are instituted for the keeping up of our *Communion with God*, which is the greatest *Delight of the Soul* that's ally'd to the other World. God appointed to the *Jewish Church* a great many *Feasts* in the Year (and but one *Fast*, and that but for one Day) on Purpose for this End, that they might *rejoice before the Lord their God*, they, and their Families, *Deut*, 16. 11.

Prayer is an Ordinance of God, appointed for the fetching in of that *Peace and Pleasure* which is provided for us. It is intended to be not only the *Ease* of our *Hearts*, by casting our Burthen upon God, as it was to *Hannah*, 1 Sam. 1. 18. who when she had pray'd, *went her Way, and did eat, and her Countenance was no more sad*; but to be the *Joy* of our *Hearts*, by putting the Promises in Suit, and improving our Acquaintance with Heaven, *Ask, and ye shall receive, that your Joy may be full*, John 16. 24. There is a *Throne of Grace* erected for us to come to; A *Mediator of Grace*

Grace appointed, in whose Name to come; The Spirit of Grace given to help our Infirmities, and an Answer of Peace promis'd to every Prayer of Faith, and all this, that we might fetch in not only sanctifying, but comforting Grace in every Time of need, Heb. 4. 16. God's House, in which Wisdom's Children dwell, is call'd *A House of Prayer*, and thither God brings them, on Purpose to make them joyful, Isa. 56. 7.

Singing of Psalms is a Gospel Ordinance, that is design'd to contribute to the Pleasantness of our Religion; not only to express, but to excite, and to encrease our Holy Joy; In *Singing to the Lord*, we make a joyful Noise to the Rock of our Salvation, Psal. 95. 2. When the Apostle had warned all Christians to take heed of Drunkenness, *Be not Drunk with Wine wherein is Excess*, lest they should think, that thereby he restrain'd them from any Mirth that would do them good, he directs them instead of the *Song of the Drunkard*, when the Heart is merry with Wine, to entertain themselves with the *Songs of Angels*, Eph. 5. 18, 19. *Speaking to your selves* (when you are dispos'd to please your selves) *in Psalms, and Hymns, and spiritual Songs, Singing, and making Melody in your Hearts to the Lord*. There is no more of Substance in this Ordinance, but the Word and Prayer put together, but the Circumstance of the Voice and Tune being a natural Means of Affecting our Hearts, both with the One and with the Other, God in Condescension to our State, hath been pleas'd to make a particular Ordinance of it, to shew how much it is his Will, that we should be *Cheerful*. Jam. 5. 13. *Is any merry? let him sing Psalms*. Is any vainly merry? let him suppress the Vanity, and turn the Mirth into a right Channel; He need not banish,

or

or *abjure* the Mirth, but let it be holy, heavenly Mirth, and in that Mirth let them *sing Psalms*. Nay, *Is any afflicted*, and merry in his Affliction, let him shew it by *Singing Psalms*, as *Paul and Silas* did in the Stocks, Acts 16. 25.

The *Lord's Day* is appointed to be a *pleasant Day*, a Day of Holy Rest, nay, and a Day of *Holy Joy*; a Thanksgiving Day; Psal. 118. 24. *This is the Day which the Lord hath made, we will rejoyce, and be glad in it.* The Psalm and Song for the Sabbath-Day begins thus, *It is a good Thing to give Thanks to the Lord*, Psal. 92. 1. So far were the Primitive Christians carry'd in this Notion, That the Lord's Day was design'd for Holy Triumph and Exultation, that they thought it improper to *Kneel* in any Act of Worship on that Day.

The *Lord's Supper* is a spiritual *Feast*; and a *Feast*, (*Solomon* saith, Eccl. 10. 19.) was made for *Laughter*, and so was this for Holy Joy; We celebrate the Memorials of his Death, that we may rejoyce in the Victories that he obtain'd, and the Purchases he made by his Death; and may apply to our selves the Privileges and Comforts, which by the Covenant of Grace are made *ours*. There we cannot but be *glad, and rejoyce in him*, where we remember his Love more than Wine, Cant. 1. 4.

(4.) The *Ministry* is appointed for the *Comfort* of the Saints, and their Guides in the Ways of Wisdom are instructed, by all Means possible, to make them *Ways of Pleasantness*, and to encourage them to go on *pleasantly* in those Ways. The Priests of old were *ordain'd for Men*, Heb. 3. 1, 2. and were therefore *taken from among Men*, that they might have *Compassion* upon the Mourners. And the Prophets had this particularly in their Commission, *Comfort ye, Comfort ye my People,*
saith

saith your God, speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, Isa. 40. 1.

Gospel-Ministers, in a special manner, are appointed to be the *Helpers of the Joy* of the Lord's People; to be *Barnabas's, Sons of Consolation*; to *strengthen the weak Hands*, and the *feeble Knees*, and to say to them who are of a *fearful Heart*, be *strong*, Isa. 35. 3, 4. The *Tabernacles* of the Lord of Hosts being *amiable*, the Care of all that serve in those Tabernacles, must be to make them appear so; that they who compass the Altars of God, may find him *God, their exceeding Joy*.

Thus hath God taken Care for the Comfort of his People, so that he is not to be blam'd if they be not comforted: But that is not all.

Secondly, There are many particular Benefits and Privileges which they are entitled to, who walk in the Ways of Religion, that contribute very much to the *Pleasantness* of those Ways. By the *Blood of Christ* those Benefits and Privileges are *procur'd* for them, which speaks them highly *valuable*, and by the *Covenant of Grace* they are *secur'd* to them, which speaks them *unalienable*.

1. Those that walk in Wisdom's Ways are *discharg'd from the Debts of Sin*, and that's *pleasant*; They are *privileg'd from Arrests*, Rom. 8. 33. *Who shall lay anything to their Charge? while it is God that justifies them*, and will stand by his own Act, against Hell and Earth: And *He is* always *near that justifies them*, Isa. 50. 8. And so is their *Advocate* that pleads for them, nearer than their *Accuser*, tho' he *stand at their right Hand to resist them*, and able to *cast him out*, and all his *Accusations*.

Surely, they put a Force upon themselves, that are merry and pleasant under the *Guilt of Sin*, for

if

if Conscience be awake, it cannot but have a *fearful Looking for of Wrath*; But if Sin be done away, the Burthen is remov'd, the Wound is heal'd and all is well; *Son be of good Chear*, Mat. 9. 2. tho' sick of a *Palsy*, yet be chearful, for *thy Sins are forgiven thee*; and therefore, not only they shall not hurt thee, but God is reconcil'd to thee, and will do thee good; Thou may'st enjoy the *Comforts* of this Life, and *fear no Snare in them*; may'st bear the *Crosses* of this Life, and *feel no Sting* in them; and may'st look forward to another Life, without Terror or Amazement.

The Pain which true Penitents have Experience of, in their Reflections upon their Sins, makes the *Pleasure* and Satisfaction they have in the Assurance of the Pardon of them doubly sweet; As the Sorrow of a *Woman in Travail* is not an *Allay*, but rather a *Foil* to the Joy, that a *Child is born* upon it into the World. No Pain more acute than that of *broken Bones*, to which the Sorrows of a *Penitent* Sinner are compar'd; but when they are well set, and well knit again, they are not only made easy, but they are made to rejoyce, to which the Comforts of a pardon'd Sinner are compar'd. Make me to hear Joy and Gladness, that the Bones which thou hast broken may rejoyce, Psal. 11. 8. All our Bones, when kept, that not one of them was broken, must say, *Lord, who is like unto thee*? But there is a more sensible Joy for one displaced Bone reduc'd, than for the *Multitude of the Bones* that were never hurt; as for one *lost Sheep* brought home, than for *Ninety and nine* that went not astray; such is the *Pleasure* which they have, that know their Sins are pardon'd.

When God's Prophets must speak comfortably to *Jerusalem*, they must tell her that her *Iniquity is pardon'd*, Isa. 40. 2. Such a Pleasure there is in the Sense

Sense of the Forgiveness of Sins, that it enables us to make a *light Matter* of Temporal Afflictions, particularly that of Sickneſs, *Iſa.* 33. 24. *The Inhabitant ſhall not ſay, I am ſick, for the People that dwelleth therein ſhall be forgiv'n their Iniquity;* And to make a *great Matter* of Temporal Mercies, when they are thus ſweeten'd and ſecur'd, particularly that of Recovery from Sickneſs; *Iſa.* 38. 17. *Thou haſt in love to my Soul, cur'd my Body, and deliver'd it from the Pit of Corruption, for thou haſt caſt all my Sins behind thy Back.* If our Sins be pardon'd, and we know it, we may go out, and come in in *Peace*, nothing can come amiſs to us; we may lye down, and riſe up with *Pleasure*, for all is clear between us and Heaven; thus *Bleſſed is the Man* whoſe Iniquity is forgiven.

2. They have the Spirit of God witneſſing with their Spirits, that they are the Children of God, *Rom.* 8. 16. and that's pleaſant. Adoption accompanies Juſtification, and if we have an Assurance of the Forgiveness of our Sins according to the Riches of God's Grace, *Eph.* 1. 5, 7. we have an Assurance of this further Comfort, that we were predeſtinated unto the Adoption of Children by Jeſus Chriſt. The ſame Evidence, the ſame Teſtimony that is given of our being pardon'd, ſerves as an Evidence and Teſtimony of our being prefer'd, our being thus prefer'd. Can the Children of Princes and Great Men, pleaſe themſelves with the Thoughts of the Honours and Expectations that attend that Relation? and may not the Children of God think with Pleaſure, of the Adoption they have receiv'd, *Gal.* 5. 6 the Spirit of Adoption, and that Spirit's Witneſs to their Adoption? And the Pleaſure muſt be the greater, and make the ſtronger Impreſſion of Joy, when they remember, that they

they were by Nature not only *Strangers* and *Foreigners*, but *Children of Wrath*, and yet thus *highly favour'd*.

The *Comfort of Relations* is none of the least of the *Delights* of this Life; But what Comfort of Relations comparable to this of being related to God, as our Father; and to Christ, as our Elder Brother; and to all the Saints and Angels too, as belonging to the same Family, which we are happily brought into Relation to? The Pleasure of *Claiming* and *Owning* this Relation, is plainly intimated in our being taught to cry, *Abba, Father*, Rom. 8. 15. why should it be thus doubled, and in two Languages, but to intimate to us the unaccountable Pleasure and Satisfaction, with which good Christians call God *Father*; 'tis the String they harp upon, *Abba, Father*

With what Pleasure doth *David's* own Spirit witness to this, *O my Soul, thou hast said unto the Lord, thou art my Lord*, Pſal. 16. 2. and it is more to me that God is mine, than if all the World were mine; But when *with* our Spirits, the Spirit of God witnesseth this too, saying to thy Soul, *yea he is thy God*, and he *owns thee* as one of his Family; *Witness* what he has wrought both *in thee*, and *for thee*, by my Hand; what Joy doth this fill the Soul with, *Joy unspeakable*; especially considering that as the Prophet speaks, *in the Place*, in the same Heart and Conscience, *where it was said* (and by the Spirit too, when he convinc'd as a Spirit of Bondage) *ye are not my People*, even *there it shall be said unto them*, by the Spirit, when he comforts as a Spirit of Adoption, *Ye are the Sons of the living God*, Hof. 1. 10.

3. They have an *Access with Boldness to the Throne of Grace*, and that's pleasant. Prayer not only

only fetcheth in Peace and Pleasure, but it is itself a great Privilege, and not only an *Honour*, but a *Comfort*; one of the greatest Comforts of our Lives, that we have a God to go to, at all *Times*, so that we need not fear coming *unseasonably*, or coming *too often*; and in all *Places*, tho' as *Jonah* in the *Fishes Belly*, or as *David* in the *Depths*, or *in the Ends of the Earth*, Psal. 130. 1. and 61. 2.

'Tis a Pleasure to One that's full of Care and Grief to *unbosom himself*, and we are welcome to *pour out our Complaint* before God, and to shew *before him our Trouble*, Psal. 142. 1, 2. And to one that wants, or fears wanting, to *petition* one that is able, and willing to supply the Wants. And we have great Encouragement to *make our Requests known to God*; we have an *Access with Confidence*, Eph. 3. 12. not an Access with *Difficulty*, as we have to great Men, nor an Access with *Uncertainty* of Acceptance, as the *Ninevites*, *Who can tell if God will return to us?* But we have an *Access with an Assurance*, *whatsoever we ask* in Faith, according to his Will, *we know that we have the Petitions that we desir'd of him*, 1 John 5. 15.

'Tis a Pleasure to *talk to* one we love, and that we know loves us, and tho' far above us, yet takes Notice of what we say, and is tenderly concern'd for us; what a Pleasure is it then to *speak to God?* to have not only a *Liberty of Access*, but a *Liberty of Speech*, *παρρησία*, Freedom to *utter all our Mind*, humbly, and in Faith; *Boldness to enter into the Holiest by the Blood of Jesus*, Heb. 10. 19, 20. and not with Fear and Trembling as the High Priest under the Law *entred into the Holiest*, and *Boldness to pour out our Hearts* before God, Psal. 62. 8. as one tho' he knows our Case, better than we our selves, yet will give us the Satisfaction of knowing it from us, according to our own
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Shewing. Beggars that have good Benefactors, live as pleasantly as any other People: 'Tis the Case of God's People; they are Beggars, but they are Beggars to a bountiful Benefactor, that is *Rich in Mercy to all that call upon him*: Blessed are they that wait daily at the Posts of Wisdom's Doors, Prov. 8. 34. If the Prayer of the Upright be God's Delight, it cannot but be theirs, Cant. 2. 14.

4. They have a Sanctify'd Use of all their Creature Comforts; and that's pleasant. The Lord knows the Way of the Righteous, and takes Cognizance of all their Concerns, Psal. 37. 23. The Steps, yea, and the Stops too, of a good Man are order'd by the Lord; both his Successes when he goes forwards, and his Disappointments when he goes backwards; He blesteth the Work of their Hands, and his Blessing makes rich, and adds no Sorrow with it, Prov. 10. 27. more is imply'd than is express'd, it adds Joy with it, infuseth a Comfort into it.

What God's People have, be it little or much, they have it from the Love of God, and with his Blessing, and then *Behold all Things are clean and sweet to them*, Luke 10. 41. they come from the Hand of a Father, by the Hand of a Mediator, not in the Channel of common Providence, but by the Golden Pipes of the Promises of the Covenant. Even the unbelieving Husband, tho' not sanctify'd himself, yet is sanctify'd to the believing Wife, 1 Cor. 7. 14. and so is the Comfort of other Relations; for to those who please God every thing is pleasing, or should be so, and is made so by his Favour. And hence it is, Psal. 37. 16. that a Little that a Righteous Man has, having a Heart to be content with it, and the Divine Skill of Enjoying God in it, is better to him than the Riches of many Wicked were to them; and that a Dinner of Herbs where Love is, and the Fear of the Lord,

is better, and yields abundantly more Satisfaction, than *a stalled Ox and Hatred and Trouble therewith*, Prov. 15. 16. 17.

5. They have the *Testimony of their own Consciences for them in all Conditions*, and that is pleasant. A good Conscience is not only a Brazen Wall, but a *Continual Feast*; and all the Melody of Solomon's *Instruments of Musick of all Sorts*, were not to be compar'd with that of the Bird in the Bosom, when it sings sweet. If Paul has a Conscience void of Offence, tho' he be as sorrowful, yet he is always rejoicing; nay, and even when he is pressed above measure, 2 Cor. 1. 8, 12. and has receiv'd a Sentence of Death within himself, his Rejoicing is this, even the *Testimony of his Conscience* concerning his Integrity.

As nothing is more painful and unpleasant, than to be smitten and reproach'd by our own Hearts, to have our Consciences fly in our Faces, and give us our own; so there is nothing more comfortable, than to be upon good Grounds reconcil'd to our selves; to prove our own Work, Gal. 6. 4. by the Touchstone of God's Word, and to find it right, for then have we *Rejoicing in our selves alone, and not in another*: For if our Hearts condemn us not, 1 John 3. 21. then have we Confidence towards God; may lift up our Face without Spot unto him; and comfortably appeal to his Omniscience; *Thou O Lord knowest me, thou hast seen me, and try'd my Heart towards thee*, Jer. 12. 3.

This will not only make us easy under the Censures and Reproaches of Men, as it did Job, *My Heart shall not reproach me*, tho' you do, and Paul, *It is a very small Thing with me to be judged of Man's Judgment*; But it will be a continual Delight to us, to have our own Hearts say, *Well done,*

done. For the *Voice* of an enlighten'd, well-informed *Conscience* is the *Voice* of *God*, 'tis his Deputy in the Soul ; The *Thoughts* of the sober Heathen *between themselves* when they did not *accuse*, yet the utmost they could do was but to *excuse*, which is *making the best of bad* ; but they who have their *Hearts sprinkled from an evil Conscience* by the Blood of Christ, Rom. 2. 15. are not only *excus'd*, but *encourag'd* and *commended*, ἀπολογούμενων, for their *Praise* is not of *Men*, but of *God*.

It is easy to imagine the holy, humble Pleasure that a good Man has, in the just Reflection upon the successful Resistance of a strong and threatening Temptation ; the seasonable Suppressing and Crossing of an unruly Appetite or Passion, and a Check given to the Tongue, when it was about to *speak unadvisedly*. What a Pleasure is it to look back upon any good Word spoken, or any good Work done, in the Strength of God's Grace, to his Glory, and any way to the Advantage of our Brethren, either for Soul or Body. With what a sweet Satisfaction may a good Man lye down in the Close of the Lord's Day, if God has enabled him in some good Measure, to *do the Work of the Day in the Day*, according as the *Duty of the Day* requires. We may then *eat our Bread with Joy*, and *drink our Wine with a merry Heart*, when we have some good Ground to hope, that *God now accepteth our Works* through Jesus Christ, Eccles. 9. 7.

6. They have the *Earnests* and *Foretastes* of *Eternal Life and Glory*, and that's pleasant indeed. They have it not only *secur'd* to them, but *dwell-ing* in them, in the *First Fruits* of it, such as they are capable of in their present imperfect State. 1 John 5. 13. *These Things are written unto you that*

that believe on the Name of the Son of God, that ye may know, not only that you shall have, but that you have Eternal Life; you are seal'd with that Holy Spirit of Promise, Eph. 1. 13, 14. mark'd for God, which is the Earnest of our Inheritance, not only a Ratification of the Grant, but Part of the full Payment.

Canaan when we come to it, will be a Land flowing with Milk and Honey; *In God's Presence*, there is a *Fulness of Joy and Pleasures for evermore*, Psal. 16. 11. But lest we should think it long ere we come to it, the God whom we serve has been pleas'd to send to us, as he did to *Israel*, some Clusters of the Grapes of that good Land to meet us in the Wilderness; which if they were sent us in *Excuse* of the full Enjoyment, and we were to be put off with them, that would put a *Bitterness* into them; but being sent us in *Earnest* of the full Enjoyment, that puts a *Sweetness* into them, and makes them *pleasant* indeed.

A Day in God's Courts, an Hour at his Table in Communion with him, is very pleasant, better than a *Thousand Days*, than ten thousand Hours, in any of the Enjoyments of Sense; but this very much increaseth the Pleasantness of it, that it is the Pledge of a Blessed Eternity, which we hope to spend *within the Vail*, in the Vision and Fruition of God. Sabbaths are sweet, as they are *Earnests* of the everlasting *Sabbatism*, or *Keeping of a Sabbath* (as the Apostle calls it, *Heb. 4. 9.*) which remains for the *People of God*. — Gospel Feasts are, therefore, sweet, because *Earnests* of the Everlasting Feast, to which we shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob. The Joys of the Holy Ghost are sweet, as they are *Earnests* of that *Joy of our Lord*, into which all Christ's good and faithful Servants shall enter. Praising God

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God is sweet, as it is an Earnest of that blessed State, in which we shall *not rest Day or Night* from praising God. The Communion of Saints is sweet, as it is an Earnest of the Pleasure we hope to have in the *General Assembly, and Church of the First-born*, Heb. 12. 23.

They that travel Wisdom's Ways, tho' sometimes they find themselves walking in the low and darksome *Valley of the Shadow of Death*, where they can see but a little Way before them, yet at other Times they are led with *Moses* to the Top of *Mount Pisgah*, and thence have a pleasant Prospect of the *Land of Promise*, and the Glories of that good Land, not with such a Damp upon the Pleasure of it as *Moses* had, *Deut.* 34. 4. *Thou shalt see it with thine Eyes, but thou shalt not go over thither*; but such an Addition to the Pleasure of it as *Abraham* had, when God said to him, *Gen.* 13. 14, 15. *All the Land which thou seest, to thee will I give it.* Take the Pleasure of the Prospect, as a Pledge of the Possession shortly.



CHAP. IV.

The Doctrine further prov'd by Experience.

HAVING found Religion in its own Nature *pleasant*, and the Comforts and Privileges so with which it is *attended*, we shall next try to make this Truth more evident, by *appealing* to such as may be thought competent Witnesses in such a Case. I confess, if we appeal to the *natural Man*, the meer *Animal* (as the Word signifies,

nifies, 1 Cor. 2. 14.) that looks no further than the things of Sense, and judgeth by no other Rule than Sense, and *receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God*, for they are *Foolishness to him*; such a one will be so far from *consenting to this Truth*, and *concurring with it*, that he will *contradict and oppose it*: Our Appeal must be to those, that have some *spiritual Senses exercis'd*, for otherwise *the brutish Man knows not, neither doth the Fool understand this*, Psal. 92. 6.

We must therefore be allowed to look upon *convinced Sinners*, and *comforted Saints*, wicked People whom the Spirit hath rouz'd out of a sinful *Security*, and godly People whom the Spirit has *put to rest* in a holy *Serenity*, are the most competent proper Witnesses to give Evidence in this Case; and to their Experience we appeal.

First, Ask those that have *try'd the Ways of Sin and Wickedness*, of *Vice and Profaneness*, and begin to pause a little, and to consider whether the Way they are in be right; and let us hear what are their Experiences concerning those Ways: And our Appeal to them is in the Words of the Apostle, *What Fruit had ye then in those things, whereof ye are now ashamed?* Rom. 6. 21. Not only what Fruit will ye have at last, when the End of these things is Death; or, as *Job* 21. 21. *What Pleasure hath he in his House after him, when the number of his Months is cut off in the midst?* But what Fruit, what Pleasure had ye then, when you were in the Enjoyment of the best of it?

Those that have been *running to an Excess of Riot*, that have laid the Reins in the Neck of their Lusts, have rejoyced with the *young Man in his Youth*, and *walked in the Way of their Hearts*, and the Sight of their Eyes, have taken a bound-

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less Liberty in the Gratifications of Sense, and have made it their Business to extract out of this World, whatever may pass under the Name of Pleasure: But when they begin to think (which they could not find in their Hearts to do while they were going on in their Pursuit) ask them now what they think of those Pleasures which pretend to vie with those of Religion; and they will tell you,

1. That *the Pleasure of Sin was painful and unsatisfying in the Enjoyment*, and which then they had no Reason to boast of. It was a *sordid Pleasure*, and beneath the Dignity of a Man, and which could not be had, but by yielding up the Throne in the Soul to the inferior Faculties of *Sense*, and allowing them the Dominion over *Reason* and *Conscience*, which ought to command and give Law. It was the *gratifying* of an Appetite, which was the Disease of the Soul, and which would not be *satisfy'd*, but, like the Daughters of the Horse-leech, still cry, *Give, Give*.

What poor Pleasure hath the *covetous* Man in the Wealth of the World? 'Tis the *Lust of the Eye* that is thereby humour'd, for *what Good hath the Owner thereof, save the beholding thereof with his Eyes?* 1 John 2. 16. And what a poor Satisfaction is that? and yet even that is no Satisfaction neither, for *he that loveth Silver*, will find, that the more he has, the more he would have, so that he *shall not be satisfied with Silver*; nay, it fastens upon the Mind a Burthen of Care and Perplexity, so that *the Abundance of the Rich will not suffer him to sleep*, Eccles. 5. 10, 11, 12.

Drunkenness passeth for a pleasant Sin, but it is a *brutish* Pleasure, for it puts a Force upon the Powers of Nature, disturbs the Exercise of Reason, and puts Men out of the Possession and

Enjoyment of their own Souls; and so far is it from yielding any true Satisfaction, that the gratifying of this base Appetite is but bringing Oil to a Flame: *When I awake, I will seek it yet again,* is the Language of the Drunkard, *Prov. 23. 35.*

Contention and Revenge pretend to be pleasant Sins too, *Est vindicta bonum vitâ jucundius ipsâ;* but it is so far from being so, that it is, of all other Sins, the most vexatious: It kindles a Fire in the Soul, puts it into a Hurry and Disorder; where they are, there is *Confusion* and every evil *Work.* The Lust, from whence not only *Wars and Fightings* come, *Jam. 4. 1.* but other Sins are said to *war in the Members;* they not only *war against the Soul,* 1 *Pet. 2. 11.* and threaten the Destruction of its true Interests, but they *war in the Soul,* and give Disturbance to its present Peace, and fill it with continual Alarms.

They that have made themselves Slaves to their Lusts, will own, that it was the greatest *Drudgery* in the World, and therefore is represented in the Parable of the Prodigal, by a young Gentleman hiring himself to one that *sent him into his Field to feed Swine,* Luke 15. 16. where he was made a Fellow-commoner with them, and *would fain have fill'd his Belly with the Husks* that they did eat, such a *Disgrace,* such a *Dissatisfaction* is there in the Pleasures of Sin; Besides the Diversity of Masters which Sinners are at the Beck of, and their Disagreement among themselves; for they that are *disobedient* to that God who is *One,* are *deceiv'd,* serving *divers Lusts and Pleasures,* and therein *led Captive* by Satan, their sworn Enemy, *at his Will,* Tit. 3. 3.

2. That *the Pleasure of Sin was very bitter, and tormenting in the Reflection.* We will allow that there is a *Pleasure in Sin for a Season*, Heb. 11. 25. but that *Season* is soon over, and is succeeded by another *Season* that is the *Reverse* of it; the *Sweetness* is soon gone, and leaves the *Bitterness* behind in the *Bottom* of the *Cup*; the *Wine* is red, and gives its *Colour*, its *Flavour* very agreeable, but at the last it *bites like a Serpent, and stings like an Adder*, Prov. 23. 32. Sin is that *strange Woman*, whose *Flatteries* are charming, but *her End bitter as Wormwood*, Prov. 5. 3, 4.

When *Conscience* is awake, and tells the *Sinner* he is *verily guilty*; when his *Sins* are set in order before him in their true *Colour*, and he sees himself *defil'd* and *deform'd* by them; when *his own Wickedness* begins to *correct him*, and his *Backslidings* to *reprove him*, and his own *Heart* makes him *loath himself* for all his *Abominations*, Jer. 2. 19. where is the *Pleasure* of his *Sin* then? As the *Thief* is *asham'd* when he is discover'd to the *World*, so are the *Drunkards*, the *Unclean*, when discover'd to themselves; and say, *Where shall I cause my Shame to go?* there is no *Remedy*, but I must *lie down in it*. If the *Pleasure* of any *Sin* would last, surely that of ill got *Gain* would, because there is something to *shew* for it; and yet tho' that *Wickedness* be *sweet* in the *Sinner's Mouth*, tho' he *hide it under his Tongue*, yet in his *Bowels 'tis turn'd* into the *Gall of Asps*, Job 20. 11, &c. He hath *swallow'd down Riches*, but shall be forc'd to *vomit them up again*.

Solomon had skim'd the *Cream* of sensual *Delights*, and pronounc'd not only *Vanity* and *Vexation* concerning them all, even the best, but

concerning those of them that were *sinful*, the forbidden Pleasures into which he was betray'd, that the Reflection upon them fill'd him with Horror and Amazement: *I apply'd my Heart*, faith he, *to know the Wickedness of Folly, even of Foolishness and Madness*, so he now calls the Looses he had taken; he cannot speak bad enough of them, for *I find more bitter than Death, the Woman whose Heart is Snares and Nets, and her Hands as Bands*, Eccl. 7. 26.

And is such Pleasure as this worthy to come in Competition with the Pleasures of Religion, or to be nam'd the same Day with them? What *sensless* Creatures are the *Sensual*, that will not be perswaded to quit the *Pleasures of Brutes*, when they shall have in Exchange the *Delights of Angels*?

Secondly, Ask those that have *try'd the Ways of Wisdom*, what are their Experiences concerning those Ways. *Call now if there be any that will answer you, and to which of the Saints will you turn?* Job 5. 1. Turn you to which you will, and they will agree to this, that *Wisdom's Ways are Pleasantness, and her Paths Peace*. However about some things they may differ in their Sentiments, in this they are all of a Mind, that God is a good Master, and his Service not only perfect Freedom, but perfect Pleasure.

And it is a Debt which aged and experienced Christians owe both to their Master, and to their Fellow-Servants, both to Christ and Christians, to bear their Testimony to this Truth; and the more explicitly and solemnly they do it, the better: Let them tell others *what God has done for their Souls*, and how they have *tasted that he is gracious*, Psal. 66. 16. Let them own to the Honour of God and Religion, that, as in 1 Kings

8. 56.

8. 56. *there has not fail'd one Word of God's good Promise*, by which he design'd to make his Servants pleasant; that what is said of the Pleasantness of Religion is really so: Let them *set to their Seal that it is true*, 1 John 1. 1. Let it have their *Probatum est*; we have found it so.

The Ways of Religion and Godliness are the good *old ways*, Jer. 6. 16. Now if you would have an Account of the Way you have to go, you must enquire of those that have travell'd it, not those who have occasionally stept into it now and then, but those whose Business hath led them to *frequent* it. Ask the *ancient Travellers*, whether they have found *Rest to their Souls* in this Way, and there are few you shall enquire of, but they will be ready to own these four things from Experience:

1. That they have found *the Rules and Dictates of Religion very agreeable both to right Reason, and to their true Interest*, and therefore pleasant. They have found *the Word nigh them*, and accommodated to them, and not at such a mighty Distance as they were made to believe. They have found *all God's Precepts concerning all things to be right*, and reasonable, and highly equitable; and when they did but shew themselves Men, they could not but *consent*, and subscribe to the *Law, that it was good*, Rom. 7. 16. and there is a wonderful *Decorum* in it.

The Laws of Humility and Meekness, Sobriety and Temperance, Contentment and Patience, Love and Charity, these are *agreeable to ourselves* when we are in our *right Mind*: They are the *Rectitude* of our Nature, the *Advancement* of our Powers and Faculties, the *Composure* of our Minds, and the *Comfort* of our Lives, and carry their own *Letters of Commendation* along with them.

them. If a Man understood himself, and his own *Interest*, he would comport with these Rules, and govern himself by them, tho' there were no *Authority* over him to oblige him to it. All that have thoroughly try'd them, will say they are so far from being *Chains of Imprisonment* to a Man, and as *Fetters to his Feet*, that they are as *Chains of Ornament* to him, and as *the Girdle to his Loins*.

Ask experienc'd Christians, and they will tell you what abundance of Comfort and Satisfaction they have had in *keeping sober*, when they have been in Temptation to Excess; in *doing justly*, when they might have gain'd by Dishonesty as others do, and no Body know it; in *forgiving an Injury*, when it was in the Power of their Hand to revenge it; in *giving Alms* to the Poor, when perhaps they streighten'd themselves by it; in *submitting to an Affliction*, when the Circumstances of it were very aggravating; and in *bridling their Passion* under great Provocations. With what Comfort does *Nehemiah* reflect upon it, that tho' his Predecessors in the Government had abus'd their Power, yet *so did not I* (saith he, *Neh. 5. 15.*) *because of the Fear of God*. And with what Pleasure doth *Samuel* make his Appeal, *1 Sam. 12. 3.* *Whose Oxe have I taken, or whom have I defrauded?* And *Paul* his; *I have coveted no Man's Silver, or Gold, or Apparel*. If you would have a Register of Experiences to this Purpose, read the 119th Psalm, which is a Collection of *David's* Testimonies to the Sweetness and Goodness of God's Law, the Equity and Excellency of it, and the abundant Satisfaction that is to be found in a constant conscientious Conformity to it.

2. That they have found *the Exercises of Devotion to be very pleasant and comfortable*, and if there

there be an Heaven upon Earth, it is in Communion with God in his Ordinances; in hearing from him, in speaking to him; in receiving the Tokens of his Favour and Communications of his Grace, and returning pious Affections to him; pouring out the Heart before him, lifting up the Soul to him.

All good Christians will subscribe to *David's Experience*, *Psal. 73. 28. It is good for me to draw near to God*; the nearer the better; and it will be *best of all*, when I come to be *nearest of all* within the Vail, and will joyn with him in saying, *Return unto thy Rest, O my Soul*, *Psal. 116. 7. to God as to thy Rest*, and repose in him. I have found that Satisfaction in Communion with God, which I would not exchange for all the *Delights of the Sons of Men*, and the *peculiar Treasures of Kings and Provinces*.

What a Pleasure did those pious *Jews* in *Hezekiah's* Time find in the Solemnities of the *Passover*, who when they had kept seven Days according to the Law in attending on God's Ordinances, *took Counsel together to keep other seven Days*, and they kept other seven Days with Gladness, *2 Chr. 30. 23*. And if Christ's Hearers had not found an abundant Sweetness and Satisfaction in attending on him, they would never have continu'd their Attendance *three Days* in a desert Place, as we find they did, *Mat. 15. 32*. No Wonder then that his own Disciples, when they were Spectators of his Transfiguration, and Auditors of his Discourse with *Moses* and *Elias* in the holy Mount, said, *Master, it is good for us to be here*; here let us *make Tabernacles*, *Mat. 17. 4*.

I appeal to all, that know what it is to be inward with God in an Ordinance, to worship him in the Spirit, whether they have not found abund-

dant Satisfaction in it? They will say with the Spouse, Cant. 2. 3. *I sate down under his Shadow with Delight, and his Fruit was sweet unto my Taste:* And with the noble Marquess of Vico, *Let their Money perish with them, that esteem all the Wealth and Pleasure of this World worth one Hour's Communion with God in Jesus Christ.* They will own, that they never had that true Delight and Satisfaction in any of the Employments or Enjoyments of this World, which they have had in the Service of God, and in the believing Relishes of that loving Kindness of his, which is *better than Life*, Psal. 63. 3, 5. These have put Gladness into their Hearts, more than the *Joy of Harvest*, or theirs that *divide the Spoil*. If in their Preparations for solemn Ordinances they have gone forth weeping, bearing precious Seed, yet they have come again with Rejoycing, bringing their *Sheaves with them*, Psal. 126. 5, 6.

3. That they have found the Pleasure of Religion sufficient to overcome the Pains and Trouble of Sense, and to take out the Sting of them, and take off the Terror of them. This is a plain Evidence of the Excellency of spiritual Pleasures, that religious Convictions will soon conquer sensual Delights, and quite extinguish them. So that they became as *Songs to a heavy Heart*, for a wounded Spirit who can bear? But it has often been found, that the Pains of Sense have not been able to extinguish spiritual Delights, but have been conquer'd and quite overbalanc'd by them. Joy in Spirit has been to many a powerful Allay to Trouble in the Flesh.

The Pleasure that holy Souls have in God, as it needs not to be supported by the Delights of Sense, so it fears not being suppress'd by the Grievances of Sense. They can rejoyce in the Lord,
and

and joy in him as the God of their Salvation, even then, when the *Fig-Tree doth not blossom*, and *there is no Fruit in the Vine*, Hab. 3. 17, 18. for even then, when in the World they have *Tribulation*, Christ has provided that in him they should have *Satisfaction*.

For this we may appeal to the Martyrs, and other Sufferers for the Name of Christ; how have their spiritual Joys made their Bonds for Christ easy, and made their Prisons their *delectable Orchards*, as one of the Martyrs call'd his. Animated by these Comforts, they have not only taken patiently, but *taken joyfully the spoiling of their Goods*, knowing in themselves that they have in *Heaven a better*, and a more enduring *Substance*, Heb. 10. 34. Ask *Paul*, and he will tell you, 2 Cor. 6. 4, 5. that even then when he was *troubled on every Side*, when *without were Fightings and within were Fears*, yet he was *fill'd with Comfort*, and was *exceeding joyful in all his Tribulation*; and that as his Sufferings for Christ did increase, his Consolation in Christ increas'd proportionably, 2 Cor. 1. 5. And tho' he expects no other but to finish his Course with Blood, yet he doubts not but to *finish his Course with Joy*.

Nay, we may appeal to the Sick-beds and Death-beds of many good Christians for the Proof of this; when wearisome Nights have been appointed to them, yet God's *Statutes have been their Songs*, their *Songs in the Night*, Psal. 119. 54. *I have Pain*, said one, but I bless God *I have Peace*; weak and dying, said another, but *sat Lucis intus*, Light and Comfort enough within. The Delights of Sense forsake us, when we most need them to be a Comfort to us; when a Man is *chasten'd with Pain upon his Bed*, and the *Multitude of his Bones with strong Pain*, he *abhorreth*

borreth Bread and dainty Meat, and cannot relish it, Job 33. 19, 20. But then the Bread of Life and spiritual Dainties have the sweetest Relish of all. Many of God's People have found it so: This is my Comfort in mine Affliction, that thy Word hath quickned me, Psal. 119. 50. This has made all their Bed in their Sickness, and made it easy.

The Pleasuntness of *Wisdom's Ways* hath sometimes been remarkably attested by the Joys and Triumphs of dying Christians, in reflecting upon that Divine Grace which hath carry'd them comfortably *through* this World, and is then carrying them more comfortably out of it to a better. *What is that Light which I see*, said an eminent Divine upon his Death-bed; *It is the Sun-shine*, said one that was by: No, reply'd he, *it is my Saviour's Shine; O the Joys, O the Comforts that I feel! Whether in the Body, or out of the Body, I cannot tell; but I see and feel things that are unutterable, and full of Glory. O let it be preached at my Funeral, and tell it when I am dead and gone, that God deals familiarly with Man. I am as full of Comfort as my Heart can hold. Mr. Joseph's Allein's Life and Mr. John Janeway's have remarkable Instances of this.*

4. They have found, that *the closer they have kept to Religion's Ways, and the better Progress they have made in those Ways, the more Pleasure they have found in them.* By this it appears, that the Pleasure takes its Excellency from the Religion; that the more Religion prevails, the greater the Pleasure is. What Disquiet and Discomfort *Wisdom's Children* have, is owing not to *Wisdom's Ways*, those are pleasant, but to their *Deviations* from those Ways, or their *Slothfulness* and
Trifling

Being RELIGIOUS.



Trifling in these Ways; those indeed are *unpleasant*, and sooner or later will be found so.

If good People are sometimes *drooping*, and in *Sorrow*, it is not because they are *good*, but because they are *not so good as they should be*; they do not live up to their Profession and Principles, but are too much in Love with the Body, and hanker too much after the *World*; tho' they do not turn back to *Sodom*, they *look back* towards it, and are too mindful of the Country *from which they came out*; and this makes them uneasy, this forfeits their Comforts, and grieves their Comforter, and disturbs their Peace, which would have been *firm* to them, if they had been *firm* to their Engagements. But if we turn aside out of the Ways of God, we are not to think it strange if the Consolations of God do not follow us.

But if we *cleave to the Lord with full Purpose of Heart*, then we find the *Joy of the Lord our Strength*. Have we not found those Duties most *pleasant*, in which we have taken most *Pains* and most *Care*? and that we have had the most comfortable Sabbath-Visits made to our Souls then, when we have been most *in the Spirit on the Lord's Day*, Rev. i. 10.

And the longer we continue, and the more we mend our Pace in these Ways, the more Pleasure we find in them. This is the Excellency of *spiritual Pleasures*, and recommends them greatly, that they *increase with Use*, so far are they from with'ring, or going to Decay: The Difficulties which may at first be found in the Ways of Religion wear off by Degrees, and the Work of it grows more *easy*, and the Joys of it more *sweet*.

Ask those that have back-slidden from the Ways of God, have left their first Love, and begin to bethink themselves, and to remember whence they

they are fallen, whether they had not a great deal more Comfort when they kept close to God, than they have had since they turn'd aside from him; and they will say with that Adulteress, when she found the Way of her Apostacy hedg'd up with Thorns, *I will go, and return to my first Husband, for then it was better with me than now*, Hof. 2. 7. There is nothing got by departing from God, and nothing lost by being faithful to him.



CH A P. V.

The Doctrine illustrated by the Similitude us'd in the Text, of a pleasant Way or Journey.

THE Practice of Religion is often, in Scripture, spoken of as a *Way*, and our walking in that *Way*: 'Tis the Way of God's Commandments, 'tis a *High-way*, the King's High-way, the King of Kings High-way; and those that are religious are *travelling* in that Way. The School-men commonly call Christians in this World *Viatores*, *Travellers*; when they come to Heaven they are *Comprehensores*, they have then *attained*, are at home; here they are in their *Journey*, there at their *Journey's End*. Now if Heaven be the *Journey's End*, the *Prize of our high Calling*, and we be sure if we *so run* as we ought, that we *shall obtain that*, it is enough to engage and encourage us in our Way, tho' it be never so unpleasant; but we are told *ex abundanti*, that we have also a *pleasant Road*.

Now

Now there are *twelve things* which help to make a *Journey pleasant*, and there is something like to each of them which may be found in the *Way of Wisdom*, and those who walk in that Way.

First, It helps to make a Journey pleasant to go upon a good Errand. He that is brought up a Prisoner in the Hands of the Ministers of Justice, whatever Conveniencies he may be accommodated with, cannot have a pleasant Journey, but a melancholy one: And that's the Case of a wicked Man; he is going on, in this World, towards Destruction; the Way he is in, tho' wide and broad, leads directly to it; and while he persists in it, every Step he takes is so much nearer Hell, and therefore he cannot have a pleasant Journey; 'tis absurd and indecent to pretend to make it so: Tho' the Way may seem right to a Man, yet there can be no true Pleasure in it, while the End thereof is the Ways of Death, and the Steps take hold on Hell, Prov. 5. 5.

But he that goes into a far Country to receive for himself a Kingdom, whatever Difficulties may attend his Journey, yet the Errand he goes on is enough to make it pleasant: And on this Errand they go that travel *Wisdom's Ways*; they look for a Kingdom which cannot be moved, and are pressing forwards in the Hopes of it. Abraham went out of his own Country, not knowing whither he went, Heb. 11. 8. But those that set out and hold on in the Way of Religion, know whither it will bring them, that it leads to Life, Mat. 7. 14. eternal Life; and therefore in the Way of Righteousness is Life, Prov. 12. 28. because there is such a Life at the End of it.

Good People go upon a good Errand, for they go on God's Errand as well as on their own; they

they are *serving* and *glorifying* him, contributing something to his Honour, and the Advancement of the Interests of his Kingdom among Men; and this makes it pleasant; and that which *puts* so great a *Reputation upon* the Duties of Religion, as that by them God is served and glorified, cannot but *put* so much the more *Satisfaction* into them. With what Pleasure doth *Paul* appeal to God, as the God whom *he serv'd with his Spirit in the Gospel of his Son?* Rom. i. 9.

Secondly, It helps to make a Journey pleasant, to *have Strength and Ability for it*. He that is weak, and sickly, and lame, can find no Pleasure in the pleasantest Walks; how should he, when he takes every Step in Pain? But a *strong Man rejoyceth to run a Race*, while he that's feeble trembles to set one Foot before another. Now this makes the Ways of Religion pleasant, that they who walk in those Ways are not only cur'd of their *natural Weakness*, but are fill'd with *spiritual Strength*; they travel not in their own Might, but in the *Greatness of his Strength*, who is *mighty to save*, Isa. 63. 1.

Were they to proceed in *their own Strength* they would have little Pleasure in the Journey, every little Difficulty would foil them, and they would tire presently; but they *go forth*, and go on *in the Strength of the Lord God*, Psal. 71. 16. and upon every Occasion according to his Promise, he *renews* that *Strength* to them, and they *mount up with Wings like Eagles*, they go on with Chearfulness and Alacrity, they *run* and are *not weary*, they *walk* and do *not faint*, Isa. 40. 31. God with his Comforts *enlargeth their Hearts*, and then they not only go, but *run the Way of his Commandments*, Psal. 119. 32.

That

That which to the *old Nature* is impracticable and *unpleasant*, and which therefore is declin'd, or gone about with Reluctancy, to the *new Nature* is *easy* and *pleasant*: And this new Nature is given to all the Saints, which puts a new Life and Vigour into them, *strengthens them with all Might in the inner Man*, Col. 1. 11. unto all Diligence in Doing-Work, Patience in Suffering-Work, and Perseverance in both; and so all is made pleasant. They are *strong in the Lord*, and *in the Power of his Might*, Eph. 6. 10. and this not only keeps the *Spirit* willing, even then when the *Flesh* is weak, but makes even the *lame Man* to leap as an *Hart*, and the *Tongue of the Dumb* to sing, Isa. 35. 6. *I can do all things through Christ strengthening me*, Phil. 4. 13.

Thirdly, It helps to make a Journey pleasant to have *Day-light*: 'Tis very uncomfortable Travelling in the Night, in the black and dark Night; *He that walketh in Darknes*, saith our Saviour, *knows not whither he goes*, John 12. 35. right or wrong, and that's uncomfortable; and in another Place, *If a Man walk in the Night he stumbleth, because there is no Light in him*, John 11. 10. And this is often spoken of as the miserable Case of wicked People, *They know not, neither will they understand, they walk on in Darknes*, Psal. 82. 5. They are in continual *Danger*, and so much the more, if they be not in continual *Fear*.

But Wisdom's Children are all *Children of the Light*, and of the *Day*, 1 Thes. 5. 5. They were *Darknes*, but are *Light in the Lord*, and walk as *Children of the Light*, Eph. 2. 8. *Truly the Light is sweet*, even to one that sits still, but much more so to one that is in a Journey; and doubly *sweet* to those who *set out in the Dark*, as we all did. But this great *Light* is risen upon us, not
only

only to please our Eyes, but to *guide our Feet* into the *Paths of Peace*, Luke 1. 79. And then they are indeed *Paths of Peace*, when we are guided into them, and guided in them by the Light of the Gospel of Christ. And all that *walk in the Light of Gospel-Conduct*, cannot fail to walk in the *Light of Gospel-Comforts*.

And it adds to the Pleasure of having *Day-light* in our Travels, if we are in no Danger of *losing* it, and of being *benighted*: And this is the Case of those that *walk in the Light of the Lord*; for *the Sun of Righteousness* that is *risen upon them*, with *healing under his Wings*, shall *no more go down*, but shall be *their everlasting Light*, Isa. 60. 20.

Fourthly, It helps to make a Journey pleasant to have a good Guide, whose *Knowledge and Faithfulness* one can *confide in*. A Traveller, tho' he has *Day-light*, yet may miss his Way, and lose himself, if he have not one to shew him his Way, and go before him, especially if his Way lie, as ours doth, through a Wilderness, where there are so many By-paths; and tho' he should not be guilty of any fatal Mistake, yet he is in continual Doubt and Fear, which makes his Journey uncomfortable.

But this is both the *Safety* and the *Satisfaction* of all true Christians, that they have not only the *Gospel of Christ* for their *Light*, both a *discovering* and *directing* Light, but the *Spirit of Christ* for their *Guide*: 'Tis promis'd, that he shall *lead them into all Truth*, John 16. 13. shall *guide them with his Eye*, Psal. 32. 8. Hence they are said to *walk after the Spirit*, and to be *led by the Spirit*, Rom. 8. 1, 14. as God's *Israel* of old were led through the Wilderness by a *Pillar of Cloud and Fire*, and the Lord was in it.

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This is that which makes the Way of Religion such a *High way*, as that the *Way-faring Men* tho' *Fools* shall not err therein, Isa. 35. 8. there are *Fools* indeed, *wicked ones*, who walk after the *Flesh*, that miss their *Way*, and wander endlessly; *The Labour of the foolish wearieth everyone of them, because he knoweth not how to go to the City*, Eccl. 10. 15. but those *Fools* that shall not err therein are *weak ones*, the *foolish Things of the World*, who in a Sense of their own Folly are so wise, as to give up themselves intirely to the Conduct of the Spirit, both by Conscience and the written Word, and if they have done this in Sincerity, they know whom they have depended upon to *guide them by his Counsel*, and afterwards to *receive them to his Glory*, Psal. 73. 24. These may go on their Journey pleasantly, who are promis'd, that whenever they are in Doubt, or in Danger of mistaking, or being mis-led, they shall *hear a Voice saying to them, This is the Way, walk in it*, Isa. 30. 2.

Fifthly, It helps to make a Journey pleasant, to be under a good Guard, or Convoy, that one may travel safely. Our Way lies through an Enemy's Country, and they are active, subtil Enemies; the Road is infested with Robbers, that lye in wait to spoil, and to destroy; we travel by the *Lyon's Dens*, and the *Mountains of the Leopards*; and our Danger is the greater, that it ariseth not from *Flesh and Blook*, but *spiritual Wickednesses*, 1 Pet. 5. 8. *Satan*, by the World and the *Flesh*, way-lays us, and seeks to devour us; so that we could not with any Pleasure go on our Way, if God himself had not taken us under his special Protection.

The same Spirit that is a Guide to these Travelers, is their Guard also; for whoever are sanctify'd by the Holy Ghost, are by him preserv'd in Christ
Jesus,

Jesus, Jude 1. preserv'd blameless; and shall be preserv'd to the Heavenly Kingdom, 2 Tim. 4. 18. so as that they shall not be robb'd of their Graces and Comforts, which are their Evidences for, and Earnests of Eternal Life, they are kept by the Power of God through Faith unto Salvation, 1 Pet. 1. 5. and therefore may go on Chearfully.

The Promises of God, are a *Writ of Protection* to all Christ's good Subjects in their Travels, and give them such a holy *Security*, as lays a Foundation for a constant *Serenity*. Eternal Truth it self hath assur'd them, that *no Evil shall befall them*, Psal. 91. 10. nothing really and destructively Evil, no Evil but what God will bring Good to them out of; God himself hath engag'd to be their *Keeper*, and to *preserve their going out and coming in, from henceforth and for ever*, which looks as far forwards as Eternity it self; and by such Promises as these, and that Grace which is convey'd through them to all active Believers, God carries them as upon *Eagles Wings to bring them to himself*, Deut. 32. 11.

Good Angels are appointed for a *Guard* to all that walk in *Wisdom's Ways*, to *bear them in their Arms*, where they go, Psal. 91. 11. and to *pitch their Tents* round about them where they rest, Psal. 34. 7. and so to keep them in *all their Ways*; How easy may they be that are thus guarded, and how well pleas'd under all Events, as *Jacob* was; who *went on his Way, and the Angels of God met him*, Gen. 32. 1.

Sixthly, It helps to make a *Journey* pleasant, to have the *Way* track'd by those that have gone before in the same *Road*, and on the same *Errand*. Untrodden Paths are unpleasant ones; But in the *Way of Religion*, we are both directed and encourag'd by the good *Examples* of those that have chosen the

the Way of Truth before us, and have walk'd in it. We are bidden to follow them, who are now *through Faith and Patience* (those travelling Graces of a Christian) *inheriting the Promises*, Heb. 6. 12.

'Tis pleasant to think, that we are *walking* in the same Way with *Abraham* and *Isaac* and *Jacob*, with whom we hope shortly to *sit down* in the Kingdom of God. How many holy, wise, good Men have govern'd themselves by the same Rules that we govern our selves by, with the same Views, have liv'd by the same Faith that we live by, looking for the same blessed Hope, and have by it *obtain'd a good Report*, Heb. 11. 2. And we go forth by the *Footsteps of the Flock*, Cant. 1. 8.

Let us, therefore, to make our Way easy and pleasant, *take the Prophets for an Example*, Jam. 5. 10. And being *compassed about with so great a Cloud of Witnesses*, that like the Cloud in the Wilderness that went before *Israel*, not only to *shew* them the Way, but to *smooth* it for them, *let us run with Patience*, and *Chearfulness*, *the Race that is set before us*, looking unto *Jesus*, the most encouraging Pattern of all, who has *left us an Example*, that we should follow his Steps, Heb. 12. 1. and what more pleasant than to follow such a Leader, whose Word of Command is *Follow me!*

Seventhly, It helps to make a Journey pleasant to have good Company; This deceives the Time, and takes off the Tedioufness of a Journey as much as any Thing, *Amicus pro Vehiculo*. It is the Comfort of those who walk in Wisdom's Ways, that tho' there are but few walking in those Ways, yet there are *some*, and those the wisest and best, and *more excellent than their Neighbours*; and

and it will be found there are more ready to say, *We will go with you, for we have heard that God is with you,* Zech. 8. 23.

The *Communion of Saints* contributes much to the *Pleasantness* of Wisdom's Ways; we have many *Fellow-Travellers*, that quicken one another, by the *Fellowship* they have *one with another*, as *Companions in the Kingdom and Patience of Jesus Christ*, Rev. 1. 9. It was a *Pleasure* to them, who were going up to *Jerusalem* to worship, that their Numbers increas'd in every Town they came to, and so they *went from Strength to Strength*, they grew more and more numerous, 'till every one of them in *Zion* appear'd before God, Psal. 84. 7. and so it is with God's spiritual *Israel*, to which we have the *Pleasure* of seeing daily Additions of such as shall be sav'd.

They that travel together make one another pleasant by *Familiar Converse*; and it is the Will of God that his People should by that Means encourage one another, and strengthen one anothers Hands; They that fear the Lord should speak often one to another, Mal. 3. 17. exhort one another daily, and communicate their Experiences, and it will add much to the *Pleasure* of this, to consider the kind Notice God is pleas'd to take of it; He hearkens, and hears, and a *Book of Remembrance* is written for those that fear the Lord, and think on his Name.

Eighthly, It helps to make a Journey pleasant, to have the Way lye through green Pastures, and by the still Waters, and so the Ways of Wisdom do. David speaks his Experience herein, Psal. 23. 2. that he was led into the green Pastures, the Verdure whereof was grateful to the Eye, and by the still Waters whose soft and gentle Murmurs were Musick to the Ear: And he was not driven

driven through these, but made to *lie down* in the midst of these Delights, as *Israel* when they encamp'd at *Elim*, where there were *twelve Wells of Water, and threescore and ten Palm trees*, *Exod. 15. 27.*

Gospel Ordinances, in which we deal much in our Way to Heaven, are very agreeable to all the Children of God, as these *green Pastures*, and *still Waters*; they call the *Sabbath a Delight*, and Prayer a Delight, and the Word of God a Delight. These are *their pleasant things*, *Isa. 64. 11.* There is a River of Comfort in Gospel Ordinances, the Streams whereof make glad the City of God, the Holy Place of the Tabernacles of the most High, *Psal. 46. 4.* and along the Banks of this River their Road lies.

Those that turn aside from the Ways of God's Commandments, are upbraided with the Folly of it, as leaving a pleasant Road for an unpleasant one? *Will a Man, a Traveller, be such a Fool as to leave my Fields*, which are smooth and even, *for a Rock* that's rugged and dangerous, *or for the snowy Mountains of Lebanon*, *Jer. 18. 14.* *Marg. Shall the running Waters be forsaken for the strange cold Waters*; thus are Men Enemies to themselves, and the *Foolishness of Man* perverteth his way.

Ninthly, It adds to the Pleasure of a Journey, to have it fair over Head. Wet and stormy Weather takes off very much of the Pleasure of a Journey; but 'tis pleasant Travelling when the Sky is clear, and the Air calm and serene; and this is the Happiness of them that walk in Wisdom's Ways, that all is clear between them and Heaven; there are no *Clouds of Guilt* to interpose between them and the Sun of Righteousness, and
to

to intercept his refreshing Beams; no *Storms of Wrath* gathering that threaten them.

Our Reconciliation to God, and Acceptance with him makes every thing pleasant; how can we be *melancholy*, if Heaven *smile* upon us? *Being justified by Faith we have Peace with God*, Rom. 5. 1, 2. and Peace from God, Peace made for us, and Peace spoken to us, and then *we rejoyce in Tribulation*. Those Travellers cannot but *rejoyce all the Day*, who walk in the *Light of God's Countenance*, Psal. 89. 15.

Tenthly, It adds likewise to the Pleasure of a Journey *to be furnished with all needful Accommodations for Travelling*. They that walk in the Way of God have wherewithal to *bear their Charges*, and 'tis promis'd them that they shall *want no good thing*, Psal. 34. 10. If they have not an abundance of the Wealth of this World, which perhaps will but overload a Traveller, and be an *Incumbrance*, rather than any *Furtherance*, yet they have good Bills; having Access by Prayer to the *Throne of Grace* wherever they are, and a Promise that they shall *receive what they ask*; and Access by Faith to the Covenant of Grace, which they may *draw upon*, and *draw from* as an inexhaustible Treasury. *Jehovah Jireh, The Lord will provide.*

Christ our *Melchizedec* brings forth *Bread and Wine*, as Gen. 14. 18. for the Refreshment of the poor Travellers, that they may not *faint by the Way*, 1 King. 19. 8. When *Elijah* had a long Journey to go, he was *victualled* accordingly; God will give *Grace sufficient* to his People for all their Exercises, 2 Cor. 12. 9. *Strength according to the Day; verily they shall be fed.* And since Travellers must have *baiting-places*, and *resting places*, Christ has provided *Rest at Noon*, Cant. 1. 7. in the

the Heat of the Day, for those that are his; and Rest at Night too; *Return to thy Rest, O my Soul.*

Eleventhly, It adds something to the Pleasure of a Journey to *Sing in the Way*; This takes off something of the Fatigue of Travelling, exhilarates the Spirits; Pilgrims us'd it; and God has put a Song, *a new Song into the Mouths* of his People, *Psal. 40. 3. even Praises to their God*, and Comfort to themselves. He hath given us Cause to be chearful, and Leave to be chearful, and Hearts to be chearful, and has made it our Duty to *rejoyce in the Lord always.*

It is promis'd to those, who are brought to *praise God*, by *hearing the Words of his Mouth*, that they shall *sing in the Ways of the Lord*, *Psal. 138. 5. and good Reason, for great is the Glory of the Lord.* How pleasantly did the released Captives return to their own Country, when they *came with Singing unto Zion, Isa. 51. 11.* And much more *Jehoshaphat's Victorious Army*, when they came to *Jerusalem, with Psalteries and Harps to the House of the Lord; for the Lord had made them to rejoyce over their Enemies, 2 Chr. 20. 28.* With this the Travellers may revive one another, *O come, let us sing unto the Lord.*

Twelfthly, It helps to make a Journey pleasant to have a good Prospect. The Travellers in Wisdom's Ways may look about them with Pleasure, so as no Travellers ever could, for they can call all about them *their own*, even the *World, and Life, and Death, and Things present, and Things to come* in this State, *all is yours, if you be Christ's*, *1 Cor. 3. 22.* The whole Creation is not only *at Peace* with them, but *at their Service.*

They can look before them with Pleasure; not with Anxiety and Uncertainty, but a humble Assurance; not with Terror, but Joy. 'Tis plea-

sant in a Journey, to have a Prospect of the *Journey's End*; to see that the Way we are in *leads directly to it*, and to see that it cannot be *far off*; every Step we take is so much nearer it, nay, and we are within a *few Steps* of it; We have a Prospect of being shortly with Christ in Paradise; yet a little while, and we shall be at Home, we shall be at Rest; and whatever Difficulties we may meet with in our Way, when we come to Heaven *All will be well*, Eternally well.



CHAP. VI.

The Doctrine vindicated from what may be objected against it.

SUFFER me a little (saith Elibu to Job, Job 36. 2.) *and I will shew thee that I have yet to speak on God's Behalf*, something more to say in Defence of this Truth, against that which may seem to weaken the Force of it. We all ought to concern our selves for the *Vindication of Godliness*, and to speak what we can for it, for we know that it is every where *spoken against*: And there is no Truth so plain, so evident, but there have been those that have objected against it; The Prince of Darkness will raise what Mists he can to cloud a Truth, that stands so directly against his Interest, but *Great is the Truth, and will prevail*.

Now as to the Truth of the Pleasantness of Religion,

First, It is easy to confront the Reproaches of the Enemies of Religion, that put it into an ill Name.

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There are those who make it their Business, having *perverted their own Ways*, to *pervert the right Ways of the Lord*, and cast an *Odium* upon them; as *Elymas the Sorcerer* did, with Design to *turn away the Deputy from the Faith*, Acts 13. 8, 10. They are like the wicked Spies, that *brought up an evil Report* upon the promised Land, Num. 13. 23. as a Land that did eat up the Inhabitants thereof; and neither could be *conquer'd*, nor was worth *conquering*.

The Scoffers of the *later Days* speak ill of Religion, as a *Task* and a *Drudgery*; they dress it up in frightful, formidable Colours, but very false Ones, to *deter* others from Piety, and to *justify* themselves in their own Impiety. They suggest that *Christ's Yoke is heavy*, and his *Commandments grievous*, and that to be Religious is to bid *Adieu* to all Pleasure and Delight, and to turn *Tormentors* to our selves; That God is a *hard Master*, *reaping where he has not sown*, and *gathering where he has not strew'd*, Mat. 23. 24.

There were those of Old that thus reproach'd the Ways of God and slander'd Religion, for they said, *It is vain to serve God*, Mal. 3. 14. there's neither Credit nor Comfort in it, and *what Profit is it that we have kept his Ordinances*, and (observe their invidious Description of Religion) *that we have walked mournfully before the Lord of Hosts*; as if to be Religious was to *walk mournfully*, whereas indeed it is to *walk chearfully*.

Now in Answer to these Calumnies we have this to say, that the Matter is not so. They who say thus of Religion, *speak Evil of the Things which they know not*, 2 Pet. 2. 12. while *what they know naturally as brute Beasts*, in those things they *corrupt themselves*, Jude 10. The Devil we know was a *Liar from the Beginning*, and a false

Accuser of God and Religion, and in this particularly represented God to our first Parents, *Gen. 3. 5.* as having dealt hardly and unjustly with them, in tying them out from the *Tree of Knowledge*; as if he envy'd them the Happiness and Pleasure they would attain to by eating of that Tree; and the same Method he still takes to alienate Mens Minds from the Life of God, and the Power of Godliness. But we know, and are sure, that it is a groundless Imputation, for Wisdom's Ways are *Ways of Pleasantness, and all her Paths are Peace.*

Secondly, It is easy also to set aside the *Misrepresentations of Religion, which are made by some that call themselves its Friends, and profess Kindness for it.* As there are *Enemies of the Lord* that blaspheme, *2 Sam. 12. 14.* so there are among the People of the Lord those that give them *great Occasion* to do so, as *David* did. How many *Wounds* doth Religion receive in the *House of her Friends*, false Friends they are, or foolish Ones, unworthy to be called *Wisdom's Children*, for they do not justify her as they ought; but through Mistake and Indulgence of their own Weaknesses betray her Cause instead of pleading it, and witnessing to it; and confirm People's Prejudices against it, which they should endeavour to remove.

Some that profess Religion are *morose and sour* in their Profession, peevish and ill-humour'd, and make the Exercises of Religion a Burthen, and Task, and Terror to themselves, and all about them, which ought to *sweeten* the Spirit, and make it easy, and candid, and compassionate to the Infirmities of the weak and feeble of the Flock.

Others are *melancholy* and sorrowful in their Profession, and go mourning from Day to Day under

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der prevailing Doubts, and Fears, and Disquietments about their spiritual State. We know some of the best of God's Servants have experienc'd *Trouble of Mind* to a great Degree.

But as to the former, it is their *Sin*; and let them bear their own Burthen, but let not Religion be blam'd for it; and as to the latter, though there are some very good People that are of a *sorrowful Spirit*, yet we will abide by it, that *true Piety* has *true Pleasure* in it notwithstanding.

But, (1.) God is sometimes pleas'd, for wise and holy Ends, for a Time, to *suspend* the Communication of his Comforts to his People, and to *hide his Face* from them, to *try their Faith*, that it may be *found to praise, and honour, and glory at the appearing of Christ*, 1 Pet. i. 6, 7. and so much the more for their being a while in *Heaviness thro' manifold Temptations*. Thus he *corrects* them for what has been done amiss *by them*, and takes this Course to *mortify* what is amiss *in them*; even Winter Seasons contribute to the Fruitfulness of the Earth. Thus he brings them to a closer and more humble Dependance upon Christ for all their Comfort, and teacheth them to live entirely upon him. And tho' for a *small Moment* he thus *forakes them*, Isa. 54. 7, 8. it is but to magnify his Power so much the more in supporting them, and to make his Returns the sweeter, for he will gather them with *everlasting loving Kindness*. Light is sown for them, and it will come up again.

(2.) This as it is their *Affliction*, God's Hand must be acknowledg'd in it, his righteous Hand; yet *there is Sin in it*, and that is *from themselves*. Good People have not the Comforts they might have in their Religion, and whose Fault is it? They may thank themselves; they run themselves

into the Dark, and then shut their Eyes against the Light. *My Wounds stink and are corrupt*, saith David, Psal. 38. 5. The Wounds of Sin which I gave myself are unheal'd, not *bound up*, or *mollified with Ointment*. And why? Is it for want of Balm in Gilead, or a Physician there? No, he owns 'tis *because of my Foolishness*, I did not take the right Method with them. God *speaks Joy and Gladness* to them, but they turn a deaf Ear to it, like Israel in Egypt, that hearken'd not to Moses for *Anguish of Spirit and sore Bondage*, Exod. 6. 9. But let not the Blame be laid upon Religion, which has provided Comfort for their Souls, but let them bear the Blame whose Souls *refuse to be comforted*, or who do not take the Way appointed for Comfort; who do not go through with their Repenting and Believing. David owns the Reason why he wanted Comfort, and was in Pain, and in a Toss, was because he *kept Silence*: He was not so free with God as he might, and shou'd have been; but when he said, *I will confess my Transgression unto the Lord*, he was forgiven, and all was well, Psal. 32. 3, 4, 5.

Those do both God and Christ, and themselves, and others, a deal of Wrong, who look upon him *with whom they have to do* in Religion, as one that *seeks an Occasion* against them, and *counts them for his Enemies*, and is *extreme to mark* what they think, or say, or do amiss; whereas he is quite otherwise, is *slow to Anger*, *swift to shew Mercy*, and willing to *make the best* of those whose Hearts are upright with him, though they are compass'd about with Infirmary: He *will not always chide*; he *doth not delight in the Death of them that die*, but would rather they should *turn and live*, Ezek. 33. 11. Nor doth he delight in the Tears of them that weep, doth not *afflict willingly*,

lingly, nor grieve the Children of Men, Lam. 3. 33. much less his own Children, but would rather they should be upon good Grounds comforted. Religion then clears itself from all Blame, which some may take Occasion to cast upon it, from the uncomfortable Lives which some lead that are religious.

But, *Thirdly*, it will require some more Pains to reconcile this Truth of the *Pleasantness of religious Ways*, with that which the *Word of God* itself tells us of, the Difficulties which the Ways of Religion are attended with. We value not the *Misapprehensions* of some, and the *Misrepresentations* of others, concerning religious Ways; but we are sure the Word of God is of a Piece with itself, and doth not contradict itself. Our Master hath taught us to call the Way to Heaven a *narrow Way*, ὁδὸς τεθλιμμένη, an *afflicted Way*, a distressed Way; and we have in Scripture many things that speak it so. And it is true; but that doth not contradict this Doctrine, That the *Ways of Wisdom* are pleasant: For the Pleasantness that is in *Wisdom's Ways* is intended to be a Balance, and it is very much an Over-balance to that in them which is any way *distasteful* or *incommodious*. As for the imaginary Difficulties which the Sluggard dreams of, a *Lion in the Way*, a *Lion in the Street*, we do not regard them: But there are some real Difficulties in it, as well as real Comforts, for *God hath set the one over-against the other*, Eccl. 7. 14. that we might study to comport with both, and might sing, and sing unto God of both, *Psal.* 101. 1.

We will not, we dare not make the Matter better than it is, but will allow there is that in Religion which at first View may seem *unpleasant*; and yet doubt not but to shew that it is re-

conciliable to, and consistent with all that Pleasure which we maintain to be in Religion, and so to take off all Exceptions against this Doctrine. *Amice Scripturarum lites, utinam & nostræ!* 'Twere well if we could agree with one another, as well as Scripture doth with itself.

There are *four* things which seem not well to consist with this Doctrine, and yet 'tis certain they do.

First, It is true, that to be religious, is to live a *Life of Repentance*, and yet religious Ways are pleasant notwithstanding. It is true we must *mourn for Sin daily*, and reflect with Regret upon our manifold Infirmities; Sin must be bitter to us, and we must even loath and abhor ourselves for our Corruptions that dwell in us, and the many actual Transgressions that are committed by us. We must renew our Repentance daily, and every Night must make some sorrowful Reflections upon the Transgressions of the Day. But then,

1. It is not our *walking in the Way of Wisdom* that creates us this Sorrow, but our *trifling* in that Way, and our *turning aside* out of it. If we would keep close to these Ways, and pass forwards in them as we ought, there would be no Occasion for Repentance. If we were as we should be, we should be always praising God, and rejoicing in him; but we *make other Work for ourselves* by our own Folly, and then complain that Religion is *unpleasant*, and whose Fault is that? If we would be always *loving and delighting* in God, and would live a *Life of Communion* with him, we should have no Occasion to repent of *that*; but if we leave the *Fountain of living Waters*, and turn aside to *broken Cisterns*, or the *Brooks in Summer*, and see Cause (as doubt-

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less we shall) to repent of *that*, we may thank ourselves.

What there is of *Bitterness* in Repentance, is owing not to our Religion, but to our Defects and Defaults in Religion; and it proves not that there is Bitterness in the *Ways of God*, but in the *Ways of Sin*, which make a penitential Sorrow necessary for the preventing of a Sorrow a thousand times worse; for sooner or later *Sin will have Sorrow*. If Repentance be *bitter*, we must say, not this comes of being *godly*, but this comes of being *sinful*; Jer. 4. 18. *This is thy Wickedness because it is bitter*. If by Sin we have made Sorrow necessary, 'tis certainly better to mourn now, than *mourn at the last*, Prov. 5. 11. To continue *impenitent*, is not to *put away Sorrow from thy Heart*, but to put it off to a worse Place.

2. Even in *Repentance*, if it be right, there is a *true Pleasure*, a Pleasure accompanying it. Our Saviour hath said of them who thus mourn, not only that they *shall be comforted*, but that they *are blessed*, Mat. 5. 4. When a Man is conscious to himself that he has done an ill thing, and what is *unbecoming* him, and may be hurtful to him, 'tis incident to him to repent of it. Now Religion hath found a Way to put a Sweetness into that Bitterness. Repentance, when it is from under the Influence of Religion, is nothing but Bitterness and Horror, as *Judas's* was; but Repentance, as it is made an Act of Religion, as it is one of the Laws of Christ, is *pleasant*, as it is the raising of the Spirit, and the *discharging* of that which is noxious and offensive.

Our Religion has not only taken Care, that Penitents be not *overwhelm'd* with an *Excess of Sorrow*, 2 Cor. 2. 7. and *swallow'd up* by it; that their Sorrow do not work Death, as the Sorrow

of the World doth; but it has provided, that even this bitter Cup should be *sweetned*; and therefore we find that under the Law, the *Sacrifices for Sin* were commonly attended with *Expressions of Joy*: And while the Priests were *sprinkling the Blood* of the Sacrifices to *make Atonement*, 2 Chr. 29 24, 25. the Levites attended with *Psalteries and Harps*, for so was the *Commandment of the Lord by his Prophets*. Even the Day to *afflict the Soul* is the *Day of Atonement*; and when we receive the *Atonement*, we *joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ*, Rom. 5. 1. In giving *Consent* to the *Atonement*, we *take the Comfort* of the *Atonement*.

In sorrowing for the Death of some dear Friend or Relation, thus far we have found a Pleasure in it, that it hath given *Vent* to our Grief which our Spirits were full of; so in Sorrow for Sin, the shedding of just Tears is some Satisfaction to us. If 'tis a Pleasure to be angry, when a Man thinks with *Jonah*, he *doth well to be angry*, much more is it a Pleasure to be sorry, when a Man is sure he doth well to be sorry. The same Word in *Hebrew*, צַדִּיק, signifies both *consolari* and *pœnitere*, both to *comfort* and to *repent*, because there is *Comfort* in true *Repentance*.

3. Much more *after Repentance*, there is a Pleasure attending it, and flowing from it. It is a Way of *Pleasantness*, for it is the Way to *Pleasantness*. To them that *mourn in Zion*, that sorrow after a godly Sort, God hath appointed *Beauty for Ashes*, and the *Oil of Joy for Mourning*, Isa. 61. 3. And the more the Soul is humbled under the Sense of Sin, the more sensible will the *Comfort of Pardon* be; 'tis wounding in order to being heal'd: The *Jubilee Trumpet* sounded in the Close of the

the Day of *Soul-Affliction*, Lev. 25. 9. which proclaim'd the *acceptable Year of the Lord*, the Year of Release; and an *acceptable Year* it is indeed, to those who find themselves *ty'd and bound with the Cords of their Sins*.

True Penitents go weeping, 'tis true, but it is to seek the *Lord of Hosts*, Jer. 50. 4, 5. to seek him as *their God*, and to enter into *Covenant* with him: And let their *Hearts rejoyce that seek the Lord*, Psal. 105. 3. for they shall find him, and find him their *bountiful Rewarder*. They sorrow not as those *that have no Hope*, but good Hope that their Iniquities are forgiven; and what Joy can be greater than that of a *Pardon* to one *condemn'd*?

Secondly, It is true, that to be religious is to take Care, and take Pains, and to labour earnestly, Luke 13. 25. and yet *Wisdom's Ways are Ways of Pleasantness*. It is true, we must strive to enter into this Way, must be in an *Agony*, so the Word is. There is a *Violence* which the *Kingdom of Heaven suffers*, and the *Violent take it by Force*, Mat. 11. 12. And when we are in that Way, we must run with *Patience*, Heb. 12. 1. The Bread of Life is to be eaten in the *Sweat of our Face*; we must be always upon our Guard, and keep our Hearts with all Diligence. Business for God and our Souls is what we are not allow'd to be slothful in, but *servent in Spirit serving the Lord*, Rom. 12. 11. We are *Soldiers of Jesus Christ*, and we must endure *Hardness*, must war the good Warfare till it be accomplished, 2 Tim. 2. 3.

And yet even in this *Contention* there is *Comfort*. 'Tis Work indeed, and Work that requires Care; and yet it will appear to be *pleasant Work*, if we consider how we are *enabled* for it, and *encourag'd* in it.

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And yet even in this *Contention* there is *Comfort*. 'Tis Work indeed, and Work that requires Care; and yet it will appear to be pleasant Work, if we consider how we are enabled for it, and encouraged in it.

1. How we are *enabled* for it, and strengthen'd with Strength in our Souls to *go on* in it, and *go through* with it. It would be unpleasant, and would go on very heavily, if we were left to our selves, to travel in our own Strength; but if we be acted and animated in it by a *better Spirit*, and *mightier Power* than our own, 'tis pleasant. If God *work in us both to will and to do of his own good Pleasure*, Phil. 2. 12, 13. we shall have no Reason to complain of the Difficulty of our Work, for God *ordains Peace for us*, true Peace and Pleasure by *working all our Works in us*, Isa. 26. 12.

We may *sing at our Work*, if our Minds be by the Spirit of God brought to it, our Hands strengthen'd for it, and our *Infirmities* help'd, Rom. 8. 26. and particularly our Infirmities in Prayer; that by it we may fetch in Strength for every Service, Strength *according to the Day*. Daniel at first found God's speaking to him a *Terror*, he could not bear it; but when one like *the Appearance of a Man came and touch'd him*, (who could be no other but Christ the Mediator) and put Strength into him, saying, *Peace be unto thee, be strong, yea, be strong*, it was quite another thing with him, then nothing more pleasant, *Let my Lord speak, for thou hast strengthen'd me*, Dan. 10. 17, 18, 19.

Tho' the Way to Heaven be *up Hill*, yet if we be carried on in it as *upon Eagles Wings*, it will be pleasant; and those are so that wait upon the Lord, for to them it is promis'd that they *shall renew their Strength*. That is pleasant Work, tho' *against the Grain* to our corrupt Natures; for the doing of which we have not only a *new Nature* given us, inclining us to it, and making us habitually capable of Application to it, but *actual Supplies of Grace sufficient* for the doing of it, premis'd

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promis'd us, 2 Cor. 12. 9, 10. by one who knows what Strength we need, and what will serve, and will neither be *unkind* to us, not *unfaithful* to his own Word. And it is observable that when God, tho' he eas'd not *Paul* of the Thorn in the Flesh, yet said that good Word to him, *My Grace is sufficient for thee*, immediately it follows, *Therefore I take Pleasure in Infirmities, in Reproaches, in Distresses for Christ's sake, for when I am weak, then I am strong.* Sufficient Grace will make our Work *pleasant*, even the hardest Part of it.

2. How we are *encouraged* in it. 'Tis true, we must *take Pains*, but the Work is good Work, and is to be done, and is done by all the Saints from a Principle of holy Love, and that makes it *pleasant*, 1 John 5. 3. as *Jacob's Service for Rachel* was to him, because he lov'd her. 'Tis an unspeakable Comfort to industrious Christians, that they are *working together with God*, and he with them; that their Master's Eye is upon them, and a Witness to their Sincerity; he *sees in secret*, and will *reward openly*, Mat. 6. 6. God now *accepteth their Works*, smiles upon them, and his Spirit speaks to them *good Words* and *comfortable Words*, Zech. 1. 13. witnesseth to their Adoption. And this is very encouraging to God's Servants, as it was to the Servants of *Boaz*, to have their Master come to them, when they were hard at Work, reaping down his own Fields, and with a pleasant Countenance say to them, *The Lord be with you*, Ruth 2. 4. Nay, the Spirit saith more to God's Labourers, *The Lord is with you*.

The Prospect of the *Recompence of Reward*, is in a special Manner *encouraging* to us in our Work, and makes it *pleasant*, and the little Difficulties we meet with in it to be *as nothing*.

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'Twas by having an Eye to this, that *Moses* was encourag'd not only to bear the *Reproach of Christ*, but to *esteem it greater Riches than the Treasures of Egypt*, Heb. 11. 26. In all Labour there is *Profit*, and if so, there is *Pleasure* also in the Prospect of that Profit, and according to the Degree of it. We must *work*, but it is to work out *our Salvation*, a great Salvation, which when it comes, will abundantly make us Amends for all our Toil. We must *strive*, but it is to enter *into Life*, eternal Life. We must *run*, but it is for an *incorruptible Crown*, the Prize of our *high Calling*. And we do not run *at an Uncertainty*, nor *fight as those that beat the Air*, for to him that *sows Righteousness there is a sure Reward*, Prov. 11. 18. and the Assurance of that Harvest will make even the Seedtime pleasant.

Thirdly, It is true, that to be religious, is to *deny ourselves in many things that are pleasing to Sense*: And yet Wisdom's Ways are *Pleasantness* for all that. It is indeed necessary, that beloved Lusts should be mortify'd and subdu'd, corrupt Appetites cross'd and displeas'd, which, to the natural Man, is like *plucking out a right Eye*, and *cutting off a right Hand*, Mat. 5. 29 There are forbidden Pleasures that must be abandon'd, and kept at a Distance from: The Flesh must not be gratify'd, nor *Provision* made to *fulfill the Lusts* of it, Rom. 13. 14. but on the contrary, we must *keep under the Body*, and *bring it into Subjection*, 1 Cor. 9. 27. we must *crucify the Flesh*, must kill it, and put it to a *painful Death*. The first Lesson we are to learn in the School of Christ is to *deny ourselves*, Mat. 16. 24. and this must be our constant Practice; we must use ourselves to deny ourselves, and thus *take up our Cross daily*.

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Now will not this spoil all the Pleasure of a religious Life? No, it will not; for the Pleasures of Sense which we are to deny ourselves in, are comparatively *despicable*, and really *dangerous*.

1. These Pleasures we are to deny ourselves in, are *comparatively despicable*: How much sower they are valu'd and esteem'd by those who live by Sense, and know no better, they are look'd upon with a generous Contempt by those who live by Faith, and are acquainted with Divine and Spiritual Pleasures. And it is no Pain to deny ourselves in these Pleasures, when we know ourselves entitl'd to *better*, more rational, and noble, and agreeable, the Delights of the blessed Spirits above.

The *Garlick* and *Onions* of *Egypt* were doted upon by those, that knew not how to value either the *Manna* of the Wilderness, or the Milk and Honey of *Canaan*, Numb. 11. 5. So the base and sordid Pleasures of Sense are relish'd by the deprav'd and vicious Appetites of the carnal Mind: But when a Man has learn'd to put a due Estimate upon *spiritual* Pleasures, those that are *sensual* have lost all their Sweetness, and are become the most *insipid* things in the World; have no Pleasure in them, in comparison with that far greater Pleasure which *excelleth*.

Is it any Diminution to the Pleasure of a grown Man, to deny himself the Toys and Sports which he was fond of when he was a Child? No, when he became a Man he *put away those childish things*; he is now *past them*, he's *above them*, for he is acquainted with those Entertainments that are manly and more generous. Thus mean and little do the Pleasures of Sense appear,

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to those that have learn'd to delight themselves in the Lord.

2. They are really dangerous, they are apt to *take away the Heart*. If the Heart be set upon them, they blind the Mind, debauch the Understanding and Conscience, and in many quench the Sparks of Conviction, and of that holy Fire which comes from Heaven, and tends to Heaven. They are in Danger of drawing away the Heart from God, and the more they are valu'd and coveted, the more dangerous they are, of *piercing us through with many Sorrows*, and of *drowning us in Destruction and Perdition*; To deny our selves in them, is but to avoid a Rock, upon which Multitudes have fatally split themselves.

What Diminution is it to the Pleasure of a safe and happy Way on sure Ground, which will certainly bring us to our *Journey's End*, to deny our selves the false and pretended Satisfaction, of walking in a fair but dangerous Way, that leads to *Destruction*? Is it not much pleasanter Travelling on a rough Pavement, than on a smooth Quick-sand? Where there is a known Peril there can be no true Pleasure, and therefore the want of it is no Loss or Uneasiness.

What Pleasure can a wise or considerate Man take in those Entertainments, in which he has continual Reason to suspect a *Snare*, and a Design upon him, any more than he that was at a Feast could relish the Dainties of it, when he was aware of a naked Sword hanging directly over him by a single Thread. The *Foolish Woman*, indeed, calls the *Stolen Waters sweet*, and *Bread eaten in Secret pleasant*, Prov. 5. 17, 18. But those find no Difficulty or Uneasiness in denying them, who know that the Dead are there, and her Guests are already

in the Depths of Hell. Therefore, however the corrupt Heart may find some Reluctancy in refusing those forbidden Pleasures, we may say of it as *Abigail* did, of *David's* denying himself the Satisfaction of being reveng'd on *Nabal*; Afterwards this shall be *no Grief unto us, nor Offence of Heart*, 2 Sam. 25. 31.

Fourthly, It is true, that *Through many Tribulations we must enter into the Kingdom of God*, Acts 14. 23. That we must not only deny our selves the Pleasures of Sense, but must sometimes expose our selves to its Pains; we must take up our Cross when it lies in our Way, and bear it after Christ; We are told, that *All that will live Godly in Christ Jesus must suffer Persecution*, at least they must expect it, and get ready for it; Bonds and Afflictions abide them, Losses in their Estates, Balks in their Preferment, Reproaches and Contempts, Banishments, Deaths must be counted upon; And will not this spoil the Pleasure of Religion? No, it will not; For,

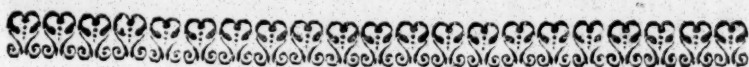
1. It is but *light Affliction*, at the worst, that we are call'd out to suffer, and *but for a Moment*, compar'd with the *far more Exceeding and Eternal Weight of Glory* that is reserv'd for us, 2 Cor. 4. 17. with which the *Sufferings of this present Time are not worthy to be compar'd*, Rom. 8. 18. All these Troubles do but touch the Body, the Outward Man, and the Interests of that, they do not at all affect the Soul; they break the *Shell*, or pluck off the *Husk*, but do not bruise the *Kernel*.

Can the Brave and Courageous Soldier take Pleasure in the Toils and Perils of the Camp, and in Jeoparding his Life in the High Places of the Field, in the eager Pursuit of Honour, and in the Service of his Prince and Country; And shall
not

not those who have the Interests of Christ's Kingdom near their Hearts, and are carry'd on by a holy Ambition of the Honour that comes from God, take a Delight in suffering for Christ, when they know that those Sufferings tend to *his* Honour, and *their own* hereafter? They that are *persecuted for Righteousness sake*, that are *revil'd*, and have *all Manner of Evil said against them falsely*, because they belong to Christ, are bidden not only to *bear it patiently*, but to *rejoyce in it*, and to be *exceeding glad*, for *great is their Reward in Heaven*; Mat. 5. 11, 12. every Reproach we endure for Christ will be a Pearl in our Crown shortly.

2. As those *Afflictions abound* for Christ, so our *Consolations in Christ do much more abound*, 2 Cor. 1. 4, 5. the more the Waters encreas'd, the higher was the Ark lifted up; The more we suffer in God's Cause, the more we partake of his Comforts, for he will not be wanting to those whom he calls out to any Hardships more than ordinary for his Name's sake. *The Lord was with Joseph in the Prison*, when he lay there for a good Conscience; And those went from the Council *rejoycing*, *that were counted worthy to suffer Shame for Christ's Name*; were *honour'd* to be *dishonour'd* for him, Acts. 5. 41.

Thus the Extraordinary Supports and Joys which they experience, that patiently suffer for Righteousness sake, *add much more to the Pleasantness of the Ways of Wisdom*, than the Sufferings themselves do, or can, *derogate from it*; for the Sufferings are humane, the Consolations are divine. They *suffer in the Flesh*, but they *rejoice in the Spirit*. They *suffer for a time*, but they *rejoice evermore*, and *this their Joy no Man taketh from them*.



C H A P. VII.

The Application of the Doctrine.

Concerning this Doctrine of the *Pleasantness of Religious Ways*, I hope we may now say as *Eliphaz* doth of his Principle, *Lo this, we have searched it, so it is*, Job 5. 27. 'tis uncontestably true, and therefore, we may conclude as he doth, *Hear it, and know thou it for thy Good*; Know thou it *for thy self*; so the Margin reads it; Apply it to thy self, Believe it concerning thy self, not only that *it is good*, but that it is good *for me* to draw near to God, Psal. 73. 28. and then only we hear Things, and know them *for our Good*, when we hear them, and know them *for our selves*.

Three Inferences by way of Counsel and Exhortation, we shall draw from this Doctrine.

First, Let us all then *be perswaded, and prevail'd with to enter into and to walk in these Paths of Wisdom, that are so very pleasant*: This is what I principally intend in Opening and Proving this Truth; most People would rather be *courted*, than *threaten'd* to their Duty. Much might be said to *frighten* you out of the Ways of Sin and Folly, but I would hope to gain the same Point another Way, by *Alluring* you into the Ways of Wisdom and Holiness. This comes to *invite* you to a *Feast*, which the Lord of Hosts bath, in the Gospel, made to all Nations, Isa. 25. 6. and to all in the Nations, and to you among the rest, for none are excluded, that do not by their Unbelief exclude themselves,

themselves, a *Feast of fat Things full of Marrow, of Wines on the Lees well refined*; Delights for Souls infinitely transcending the Delicacies of Sense; you are welcome to this Feast; come for all Things are now ready; *Come eat of Wisdom's Bread, and drink of the Wine that she has mingled*, Prov. 9. 5.

Is a Life of Religion such a sweet and comfortable Life, why then should not we be *Religious*? If such as these be the *Ways of Wisdom*, why should not we be Travellers in those Ways? Let this recommend to us a Life of *sincere and serious* Godliness, and engage us to conform to all its Rules, and give up our selves to be rul'd by them. It is not enough to have a *good Opinion* of Religion, and to give it a *good Word*, that will but be a Witness against us, if we do not set our selves in good Earnest to the *Practice* of it, and make Conscience of *living up* to it.

I would here with a *particular and pressing* Importunity, address my self to you that are *young*; to perswade you, now in the Days of your Youth, now in the present Day, to make Religion your *Choice* and your *Business*, and I assure you if you do so, you will find it your *Delight*. God by his Grace convince you of the real Comforts that are to be had in real Godliness, that you may be drawn chearfully to Christ with these *Cords of a Man*, and held fast to him with these *Bands of Love*. *My Son* (saith Solomon to his little Scholar, Prov. 24. 13, 14.) *eat thou Honey because it is good, and the Honey Comb which is sweet to thy Taste*; He doth not forbid him the Delights of Sense, he may use them soberly and moderately, and with due Caution; But remember that, *So shall the Knowledge of Wisdom be to thy Soul, when thou hast found it*; Thou hast better Pleasures than these

these to mind and pursue, spiritual and rational Ones; and instead of being made indifferent to those, we should rather be led to them, and quicken'd in our Desires after them by these Delights of Sense, which God gives us to engage us to himself, and his Service.

The Age of Youth is the *Age of Pleasure*, you think you may now be allow'd to *take your Pleasure*; O that you would *take it*, and *seek it* there where alone it is to be *had*, and that is in a strict Observance of the Laws of Virtue and Godliness. Would you live a *pleasant Life*, begin betimes to live a *Religious Life*, and the *sooner* you begin, the more *pleasant* it will be; 'tis best *Travelling* in a *Morning*. Would you *rejoyce*, O young People, in your *Youth*, and have your *Hearts* to *cheer you* in the *Days of your Youth*, Eccl. 11. 9. do not *walk in the Way of your corrupt and carnal Hearts*, but in the *Way of God's Commandments*, for he knows what's good for you, better than you do your selves; Do not *walk in the Sight of your Eyes*, for the Eyes are apt to *fly upon that which is not*, Prov. 23. 5. but live by Faith, that Faith which being the *Substance of Things hoped for*, and the *Evidence of Things not seen*, will lead you to *that which is*; for *Wisdom makes those that love her to inherit Substance*, and *fills their Treasures*, Prov. 8. 21. and thence ariseth their true Satisfaction.

That which I would perswade you to, is to walk in the *Way of Wisdom*, to be *Sober minded*, to be thoughtful about your Souls and your everlasting State, and get your Minds well Principled, and well affected, and well inclin'd; *Wisdom is the Principal Thing*, therefore *get Wisdom*, and with all thy *Gettings*, get *Understanding*, Prov. 4. 7. That which I would perswade you with is the *Pleasantness of this Way*; you cannot do better for your selves

selves than by a Religious Course of Life. *My Son, if thine Heart be Wise, my Heart shall rejoyce, even mine, Prov. 23. 15, 16. yea, my Reins shall Rejoyce if thy Lips out of the abundance of thine Heart speak right Things; But that is not all, not only my Heart shall Rejoyce, but thy own shall.*

I wish you would see, and seriously consider the two *Rivals* that are *making Court* to you for your Souls, for your best Affections, *Christ* and *Satan*, and act wisely in disposing of your selves, and make such a Choice as you will afterwards reflect upon with Comfort. You are now at the *turning Time* of Life, Turn right now, and you are made for ever. *Wisdom* saith, Prov. 9. 4, 16. *whoso is Simple let him turn in to me, and she will cure him of his Simplicity; Folly* saith *whoso is Simple let him turn in to me, and she will take Advantage of his Simplicity; Now let him come whose Right your Hearts are, and give them him, and you shall have them again more your own.*

That you may determine well between these two Competitors, for the Throne in your Souls,

First, See the Folly of carnal, sinful Pleasures, and abandon them; you will never be in Love with the Pleasures of Religion, till you are perswaded to fall out with forbidden Pleasures. The Enjoyment of the Delights of Sense suits best with that Age, the Appetite towards them is then most violent; Mirth, Sport, Plays, Dainties are the Idols of young People, they are therefore call'd youthful Lusts, Eccl. 12. 1. the Days will come, the evil Days, when they themselves will say they have no Pleasure in them, like Barzillai, 2 Sam. 19. 35. who when he is old can no more relish what he Eats, and what he Drinks; O that Reason,

son, and Wisdom and Grace might make you as dead to them now as Time and Days will make you after a while.

Will you believe one that *try'd* the utmost of what the Pleasures of Sense could do towards making a Man *Happy*; He *said of Laughter*, it is mad, and of *Mirth* what doth it; and that *Sorrow is better than Laughter*, Eccl. 2. 2, 7, 3. *Moses* knew what the Pleasures of the Court were, and yet chose rather to *suffer Affliction with the People of God*, than to continue in the snare of them, *Heb. 11. 25.* and you must make the same Choice; for you will never cordially embrace the Pleasures of Religion, till you have renounc'd the Pleasures of Sin, Covenant against them, therefore, and Watch against them.

If you would *live*, and *go in the way of Understanding*, you must *forsake the Foolish*, Prov. 9. 6. take heed of the Way both of the *Evil Man*, and of the *Strange Woman*; *Avoid it, pass not by it, turn from it and pass away*, Prov. 2. 12, 16. Look upon sinful Pleasures as *mean* and much *below you*; look upon them as *vile* and much *against you*, and do not only *despise* them, but *dread* them, and *hate even the Garments spotted with the Flesh*.

Secondly, Be convinc'd of the Pleasure of *Wisdom's Ways*, and come and try them. You are, it may be, prejudic'd against Religion as a melancholy thing, but as *Philip* said to *Nathaniel*, John 1. 46. Come and see. Believe it possible that there may be a Pleasure in Religion, which you have not yet thought of. When Religion is look'd upon at a Distance, we see not that Pleasure in it, which we shall certainly find when we come to be better acquainted with it. *Peter Martyr* in a Sermon, illustrated this by this Comparison (and it prov'd a means of the Conversion of the *Marquess of Vico*;))

Vico;) He that looks upon Persons *Dancing* at a distance, would think they were Mad, but let him come nearer, and observe how they take every Step by Rule, and keep Time with the Musick, he will not only be pleas'd with it, but inclin'd to join with them.

Come and *take Christ's Yoke upon you*, and you will find it easy; try the Pleasure there is in the Knowledge of God and Jesus Christ, and in Converse with Spiritual and Eternal Things; try the Pleasure of *Seriousness*, and *Self-denial*, and you'll find it far exceeds that of *Vanity* and *Self-indulgence*. Try the Pleasure of *Meditation* on the Word of God, of Prayer and Praise, and Sabbath-Sanctification, and you will think you have made a happy Change of the Pleasure of Vain and Carnal Mirth for these true Delights.

Make this Tryal by these four Rules.

1. That *Man's Chief End is to glorify God and enjoy him*. Our Pleasures will be according to that which we pitch upon and pursue as our Chief End; If we can mistake so far, as to think 'tis our Chief End to *Enjoy the World and the Flesh*, and our Chief *Business* to *serve* them, the Delights of Sense will relish best with us: But *if the World was made for Man*, certainly *Man was made for more than the World*; And if *God made Man*, certainly he made him *for himself*; God then is our Chief Good, 'tis our *Business* to *serve* and please him, and our *Happiness* to be accepted of him.

And if so, and we believe so, nothing will be a greater *Pleasure to us*, than that which we have reason to think will be *pleasing to him*. If we do, indeed, look upon God as our Chief Good, we shall make him our Chief Joy, our *Exceeding Joy*, Psal. 93. 4. if we consider that we were made capable of the Pleasure of *Conversing* with

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with God in this World, and seeing him and enjoying him in another; we cannot but think that we wretchedly *disparage our selves*, when we take up with the mean and sordid Pleasures of Sense as our Felicity, especially if we *forego* all Spiritual and Eternal Pleasures for them; as certainly we do, and give up all our Expectations of them, if we *place our Happiness* in these present Delights; and we are guilty of a greater Absurdity than that which profane *Esau* was guilty of, who *for a Mess of Pottage sold his Birth-right*, Heb. 12. 16.

2. That the *Soul is the Man*, and *that's best for us, that is best for our Souls*. Learn to think meanly of this *Flesh*, by which we are ally'd to the Earth, and the inferior Creatures; it is formed out of the Dust, it is Dust, and it is hastning to the Dust; and then the things that gratify it will not be much Esteem'd as of any great Moment; *Meats for the Belly, and the Belly for Meats, but God shall destroy both it and them*, and therefore let us not make Idols of them.

But the Soul is the *noble part* of us, by which we are ally'd to Heaven, and the World of Spirits; those Comforts therefore which *delight the Soul*, are the Comforts we should prize most, and give the *Preference* to, for the *Soul's* sake. *Rational Pleasures* are the best for a Man.

3. That the *greatest Joy is that which a Stranger doth not intermeddle with*, Prov. 14. 10. The best Pleasure is that which lies not under the Eye and Observation of the World, but which a Man *has and hides* in his own Bosom; and by which he *enjoys himself*, and keeps not only a peaceable, but a comfortable *Possession of his own Soul*, tho' he doth not, by Laughter or other Expressions of Joy, tell them the Satisfaction he has. Christ had *Meat to eat which the World knew not of*, John 4. 32.

and so have Christians to whom he is the *Bread of Life*.

4. That *all is well that ends everlastingly well*. That Pleasure ought to have the Preference, which is of the longest Continuance. The Pleasures of Sense are Withering and Fading, and leave a Sting behind them to those that plac'd their Happiness in them; But the Pleasures of Religion will abide with us; *In these is continuance*, Isa. 64. 5. they will not turn with the Wind, nor change with the Weather, but are *Meat which endures to everlasting Life*.

Reckon that the best Pleasure which will remain with you, and stand you in stead when you come to Dye; which will help to take off the Terror of Death, and allay its Pains. The Remembrance of sinful Pleasures will give us *killing Terrors*, but the Remembrance of religious Pleasures will give us *living Comforts* in *dying Moments*. They that live over *Belshazzar's Revels* may expect to receive the Summons of Death, with the same *Confusion* that he did, when *the Joynts of his Loins were loosed, and his Knees smote one against another*, Dan. 5. 6. but they that live over *Hezekiah's Devotions* may receive them with the same Composure that he did, when with a great deal of Satisfaction he look'd back upon a well-spent Life, *Now Lord remember how I have walked before thee in Truth, and with an upright Heart*, Isa. 36. 3.

Secondly, *Let us that profess Religion, study to make it more and more pleasant to our selves*. We see how much is done to make it so, let us not receive the Grace of God herein *in vain*. Let them that walk in Wisdom's Ways, *taste the Sweetness* of them, and Relish it. Christ's Service is perfect Freedom, let us not make a Drudgery of it, nor a Toil of such a Pleasure. We should not only

be reconcil'd to our Duty, as we ought to be to our greatest Afflictions, and to *make the best* of it, but we should *Rejoyce* in our Duty, and *Sing at our Work*. If God intended that his Service should be a Pleasure to his Servants, let them concur with him herein, and not *walk contrary* to him.

Now in order to the making of our Religion *Pleasant* to us, more and more so, I shall give seven Directions.

1. *Let us always keep up good Thoughts of God, and carefully watch against hard Thoughts of him.* As it is the original Error of many that are *Loose* and *Careless* in Religion, that they *think God altogether such a one as themselves*, Psal. 50. 21. as much a Friend to Sin as themselves, and as indifferent whether his Work be done or no; so it is the Error of many that are *severe* in their Religion, that they think *God like themselves*, a hard Master; They have such Thoughts of him, as *Job* had in an Hour of Temptation, when he look'd upon God as *seeking Occasions against him, numbering his Steps, and watching over his Sins, and taking him for his Enemy*, Job. 13. 24. and 14. 16. As if he were *extreme to mark Iniquities*, and implacable to those that had offended, and not accepting any Service that had in it the least Defect or Imperfection.

But the matter is not so, and we do both God and our selves a great deal of Wrong, if we imagine it to be so; what could have been done more than God has done, to convince us that he is *gracious, and merciful, slow to anger, and ready to forgive Sin* when it is Repented of. *I said I will confess my Iniquity unto thee, and thou forgavest*, Psal. 32. 5. and as ready to accept the Services that come from an upright Heart. *He will not always chide, nor contend for ever.* So far is he from taking

Advantages against us, that he *makes the best of us*: where the *Spirit* is *willing*, he accepts that, and overlooks the *Weakness of the Flesh*. Let us deal with him accordingly; Look upon God as *Love*, and the *God of Love*, and then it will be pleasant to us to hear from him, to speak to him, to converse with him, and to do him any Service.

It is true, God is great, and glorious, and jealous, and to be worshipped with Reverence and holy Fear; but is he not *our Father*? a tender gracious Father? Have we not an Advocate with the Father? Was not God in Christ, *reconciling the World* to himself, 2 Cor. 5. 19. and to all his Attributes and Relations to us, by shewing himself *willing to be reconcil'd* to us, notwithstanding our Provocations? See him, therefore, upon a *Throne of Grace*, and *come boldly* to him, and that will make your Service of him pleasant.

2. Let us *dwell much*, by Faith, upon the *Promises of God*. What pleasant Lives should we lead, if we were but more intimately acquainted with those Declarations which God has made of his *Good Will to Man*, and the Assurances he has given of his Favour, and all the blessed Fruits of it to those who serve him faithfully. The Promises are *many*, and exceeding *Great* and *Precious*, suited to our Case, and accommodated to every Exigence; There are not only Promises to Grace, but Promises of Grace, Grace sufficient; and these Promises all *Yea* and *Amen* in *Christ*.

What do these Promises stand in our Bibles for, but to be made use of? Come then, and let us apply them to our selves, and insert our own Names in them by Faith; what God said to *Abraham*, *I am thy Shield*, Gen. 15. 1, I am *El Shaddi*, a *God All-sufficient*, Gen. 17. 1. what he said to *Joshua*, *I will never fail thee nor forsake thee*, Josh. 1. 5.

he saith to *me*. What he saith to all that love him, that *all things shall work for good to them*, Rom. 8. 28. and to all that *fear him*, that *no good Thing shall be wanting to them*, Psal. 34. 10. he saith to *me*, and why should not I take the Comfort of it?

These Promises, and the like, are *Wells of Salvation*, from which we may draw *Water with Joy*; and *Breasts of Consolation*, from which we may suck, and be satisfy'd; They will be both our *Strength*, and our *Song* in the *House of our Pilgrimage*. So well-order'd is the Covenant of Grace in all Things, and so sure, 2 Sam. 23. 5. that if having laid up our Portion in it, and so made it *all our Salvation*, we would but fetch our Maintenance from it, and so make it *all our Desire* and *Delight*, we should have in it a *continual Feast*, and should go on our Way rejoicing. See Psa. 119. 111.

3. Let us order the *Affairs of our Religion with Discretion*. Many make Religion *unpleasant* to themselves, and *discouraging* to others, by their *imprudent* Management of it; making that Service to be a Burthen by the Circumstances of it, which in it self would be a Pleasure; doing things out of Time, or tasking themselves above their Strength, and undertaking more than they can go through with, especially at first, which is like *putting new Wine into old Bottles*, Mat. 9. 17. or like *over-driving the Flocks one Day*, Gen. 33. 13. If we make the Yoke of Christ heavier than he has made it, we may thank our selves that our Drawing in it becomes unpleasant. Solomon cautions us, Eccl. 7. 16. against being *righteous overmuch*, and making our selves *over-wise*, as that by which we may *destroy our selves*, and put our selves out of Conceit with our Religion;

There may be *over-doing* in *well-doing*, and then it becomes *unpleasant*.

But let us take our Religion as Christ hath settled it, and we shall find it *easy*. When the Ways of our Religion are Ways of *Wisdom* then they are Ways of *Pleasantness*; for the more *Wisdom* the more *Pleasantness*; that *Wisdom* which *dwells with Prudence*. *Wisdom* will direct us to be *even* and *regular* in our Religion; to take Care that the Duties of our general and particular Calling, the Business of our Religion, and our necessary Business in the World, do not *interfere* or *intrench* upon one another. 'Twill direct us to *time Duty aright*; for every thing is *beautiful* and *pleasant* in its *Season*, Eccl. 3. 11. and Work is then *easy*, when we are in Frame for it.

4. Let us *live in Love*, and keep up *Christian Charity*, and the *Spiritual Communion of Saints*. If we would be of *good Comfort*, we must be of one *Mind*, 2 Cor. 13. 11. and, therefore, the Apostle presseth Brotherly Love upon us, with an Argument taken from the *Consolations in Christ*, Phil. 2. 1. *i. e.* the Comfort that is in Christianity; As ever you hope to have the Comfort of your Religion, submit to that great Law of it, *Walk in Love*. For behold how *good*, and how *pleasant* it is, how *good* in it self, and *pleasant* to us, for *Brethren to dwell together in Unity*. The more *pleasing* we are to our Brethren, the more *pleasant* we shall be to our selves.

Nothing makes our *Lives* more uncomfortable than Strife and Contention; *Wo is me that I dwell among those that hate Peace*, Psal. 120. 5. 'tis bad being among those that are dispos'd to quarrel, and worse having in our selves a Disposition to quarrel. The *Resentments of Contempt* put upon us are uneasy enough, and Contrivances to re-
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venge it much more so. And nothing makes our *Religion* more uncomfortable, than Strifes and Contentions, *about that*. We forfeit, and lose the Pleasure of it, if we entangle our selves in *perverse Disputings* about it.

But by Holy Love we enjoy our Friends, which will add to the Pleasure of Enjoying God in this World. Love it self *sweetens* the Soul, and revives it, and as it is the Loadstone of Love, it fetcheth in the further Pleasure and Satisfaction of being *belov'd*; and so it is a *Heaven upon Earth*, for what is the Happiness and Pleasure of Heaven, but that there Love reigns in Perfection? Then we have most Peace in our Bosoms, when we are most peaceably dispos'd towards our Brethren.

5. Let us *be much in the Exercise of Holy Joy, and employ our selves much in Praise*. Joy is the Heart of Praise, as Praise is the Language of Joy; Let us engage our selves to these, and quicken our selves in these. God has made *these* our Duty, by these to make all the other Parts of our Duty pleasant to us; and for that End we should abound much in them, and attend upon God with *Joy and Praise*. Let us not crowd our spiritual Joys into a Corner of our Hearts, nor our Thankful Praises into a Corner of our Prayers, but give both *Scope and Vent* to both.

Let us live a Life of *Delight in God*, and love to think of him as we do of one whom we love and value. Let the Flowing in of every Stream of Comfort *lead us to the Fountain*; and in every thing that is *grateful* to us, let us *taste that the Lord is gracious*. Let the Drying up of every Stream of Comfort *drive us to the Fountain*; and let us rejoyce the more in God for our being *depriv'd* of that, which we us'd to rejoyce in.

, Let us be *frequent* and *large* in our *Thanksgivings*; 'Twill be pleasant to us to *recount* the Favours of God, and thus to make some *Returns* for them; tho' poor and mean, yet such as God will graciously accept. We should have more Pleasure in our Religion, if we had but learn'd *in everything to give Thanks*, 1 Thes. 5. 18. for that takes out more than *half* the Bitterness of our Afflictions, that we can see Cause even to be *thankful* for them; And it infuseth more than a *double* Sweetness into our Enjoyments, that they furnish us with Matter for that Excellent Heavenly Work of *Praise*. *Sing Praises unto his Name, for it is pleasant; comfortable as well as comely*, Psal. 135. 3.

6. Let us *act in a constant Dependance upon Jesus Christ*. Religion would be much more pleasant, if we did but cleave more closely to *Christ* in it, and do all *in his Name*: The more *precious* Christ is to us, the more *pleasant* will every Part of our Work be; and therefore, *Believing* in Christ is often express'd by our *Rejoycing in him*, Phil. 3. 3. We may rejoyce *in God*, through Christ as the Mediator between us and God; may rejoyce in our Communion with God, when it is kept up thro' Christ, may rejoyce in hope of Eternal Life, when we see this Life *in the Son*; *He that hath the Son of God hath Life*, i. e. he has Comfort. 1 John 5. 11, 12.

There is that in Christ, and in his Undertaking and Performances for us, which is sufficient to satisfy all our Doubts, to silence all our Fears, and to balance all our Sorrows. He was appointed to be the *Consolation of Israel*, and he will be so to us, when we have learnt not to look for that in our selves, which is to be had in him only, and to make use of his Mediation in every thing wherein we have to do with God. When we rejoyce in the
Righteousness

Righteousness of Christ, and in his Grace and Strength, rejoyce in his Satisfaction and Intercession, rejoyce in his Dominion and Universal Agency and Influence, and in the Progress of his Gospel, and the Conversion of Souls to him, and please our selves with Prospects of his Second Coming, we have then a Joy, not only which no Man taketh from us, but which will encrease more and more, and of the *Increase of Christ's Government*, and therefore of *that Peace there shall be no End*, Isa. 9. 7. Our Songs of Joy are then most Pleasant, when the Burthen of them is, *None but Christ, None but Christ*.

7. Let us *converse much with the Glory that is to be Reveal'd*. They that by Faith send their Hearts and best Affections before them to Heaven, while they are here on this Earth, may in return fetch thence some of those Joys and Pleasures that are *at God's Right-Hand*. That which goes up in *Vapours of Holy Desire*, tho' Insensible, in *Groanings which cannot be utter'd*, will come down again in *Dews of Heavenly Consolations*, that will make the Soul *as a watered Garden*.

Let us look much to the End of our Way, how glorious it will be, and that will help to make our Way Pleasant. This *abundantly satisfies the Saints*, and is the *Fatness of God's House on Earth*, Psal. 36. 8, 9. This makes them now to *Drink of the River of God's Pleasures*, that *with him is the Fountain of Life*, whence all these Streams come, and in his Light they hope to see Light, everlasting Light. By frequent Meditations on that Rest which remains for the People of God, Heb. 4. 3. we now *enter into that Rest*, and partake of the Comfort of it.

Our Hopes of that Happiness through Grace would be very much strengthened, and our Evidences

dences for it clear'd up insensibly, if we did but *converse* more with it, and the Discoveries made of it in the Scripture. We may have *Foretastes* of Heavenly Delights, while we are *here* on Earth, Clusters from *Canaan*, while we are yet in *this* Wilderness, and no Pleasure comparable to that which these afford. That's the sweetest Joy within us, which is borrowed from *the Joy set before us*. And we deprive our selves very much of the Comfort of our Religion, in not having our Eye more to that Joy. Werejoyce most Triumphantly, and with the greatest Degrees of Holy *Glor*ying, when we *rejoyce in Hope of the Glory of God*, Rom. 6. 2. In this our *Heart is glad*, and our *Glo*ry *rejoyceth*, Psa. 16. 4.

Thirdly, Let us *make it appear*, that we have, indeed, found *Wisdom's Ways to be Pleasantness*, and *her Paths Peace*. If we have experienced this Truth, let us evidence our Experiences, and not only in Word, but in Deed, bear our Testimony to the Truth of it. Let us live as those that believe the Sweetness of Religion, not because we are *told* it but because we have *tasted* it, 1 John 1. 1.

If so be then (to borrow the Apostle's Words, 1 Pet. 2. 3.) *We have tasted that the Lord is gracious*, if we have, indeed, found it a pleasant Thing to be Religious,

1. Let *our Hearts be much enlarg'd in all Religious Exercises*, and all Instances of Gospel Obedience. The more Pleasant the Service of God is, the more we should *abound* in it. When God *enlargeth our Hearts* with his Consolations, he expects that we should *run the Way of his Commandments*, that we should *exert* our selves in our Duty with more *Vigour*, and *press forward* the more earnestly *towards Perfection*.

This

This should make us *forward* to every good Work, and *ready* to close with all Opportunities of serving God, and doing Good; That which we take a *Pleasure in*, we need not to betwice *call'd to*. If indeed the *Hearts* of those *rejoyce that seek the Lord*, as in *Psal.* 105. 3. then when God saith, *seek ye my Face*, how steadily should our Hearts answer at the first Word, *Thy Face, Lord, will we seek*, *Psal.* 27. 8. and how *glad* will they be, *when it is said unto us, Let us go to the House of the Lord*, *Psal.* 122. 1. This should make us *forward* to Acts of Charity that there is a *Pleasure in doing Good*; and we shall reflect with Comfort upon it, that we have done something that will turn to the Honour of God, and our own Account.

This should make us *Lively* in our Duty; the Heart fix'd in Hearing the Word, and in Prayer and Praise. Those that take Delight in Musick, how doth it engage them; How do all the Marks of a close Application of Mind appear in their Countenance and Carriage, and shall not we by our *Attending on the Lord without Distraction*, make it to appear, that we attend upon him *with Delight*, and are in our Element when we are in his Service. Let this be *my Rest for ever*; Here let me *dwell all the Days of my Life*, *Psal.* 27. 4.

This should keep us *Constant* and *Unwearied* in the Work and Service of God. What is really our *Delight*, we are not soon *weary of*. If we delight in approaching to God, we will *seek him Daily*, and make it our daily Work to honour him. If Meditation and Prayer be *sweet*, let them be our *Daily Exercise*; and let this *bind* our Souls with a Bond to God, and the *Sacrifice as with Cords to the Horns of the Altar*. With this we should answer all Temptations to Apostacy; shall I quit so good a Master, so good a Service? *Intreat*

me not to leave Christ, or to turn from following after him; for it is good to be here. Here let us make Tabernacles, Mat. 17. 4. Whither else shall we go, but to him that has the Words of Eternal Life?

2. Let our whole Conversation be chearful, and Melancholy be banish'd. Are the Ways of Religion Pleasant? Let us be Pleasant in them, both to our selves, and to those about us. As for those who are yet in a State of Sin and Wrath, they have reason to be Melancholy, let the Sinners in Zion be afraid, be afflicted, Joy is forbidden Fruit to them, *what have they to do with Peace? Rejoyce not, O Israel, for Joy as other People, for thou hast gone a Whoring from thy God, Hos. 9. 1.*

But those, who through Grace, are call'd out of Darknes into a marvellous Light, have Cause to be Chearful, and should have Hearts to be so. *Arise, Shine, for thy Light is come, Isa. 60. 1.* Is the Sun of Righteousness risen upon us? Let us arise and look forth as the Morning with the Morning. That Comfort which Christ directs to our Souls, let us reflect back upon others. And as our Light is come so is our Liberty; Art thou loosed from the Bands of thy Neck? O Captive Daughter of Zion, awake, awake, put on thy Strength, put on thy beautiful Garments, and shake thy self from the Dust, arise and sit down, O Jerusalem. Isa. 52. 1, 2.

Tho' vain and carnal Mirth is both a great Sin, and a great Snare, yet there is a holy Chearfulness and Pleasantness of Conversation, which will not only consist very well with serious Godliness, but greatly promotes it in our selves, and greatly adorns, it, and recommends it to others. *A merry Heart, Solomon saith, doth good like a Medicine, Prov. 17. 22. and maketh fat the Bones; while*

a broken Spirit doth hurt like a Poison, and drieth the Bones. Christians should endeavour to keep up a chearful Temper, and not indulge themselves in that which is Sadning and Disquieting to the Spirit; and they should shew it in all holy Conversation, that those they converse with, may see they did not renounce Pleasure, when they embrac'd Religion,

I am sure, none have so much Reason to rejoyce as good People have, nor so much done for them to encourage their Joy, and therefore to allude to that of Jonadab to Amnon, *why art thou, being the King's Son, lean from Day to Day?* 2 Sam. 13. 4. Are we in Prosperity? therefore let us be chearful, in gratitude to the God of our Mercies, who expects that we should *serve him with Joyfulness, and Gladness of Heart, in the Abundance of all Things*, Deut. 28. 47. and justly takes it ill if we do not.

Tristis es, & felix? sciat hoc Fortuna caveto, Ingratum dicet te (Lupe) si scierit. Mart.

Are we in Affliction? yet let us be chearful, that we may make it appear our Happiness is not laid up in the Creature, nor our Treasures on Earth. If it is the Privilege of Christians to rejoyce in Tribulation, let them not throw away their Privilege, but glory in it, and make use of it. Let the Joy of the Lord that hath *infus'd* it self into our Hearts *diffuse* it self into all our Converse. *Go thy way, eat thy Bread with Joy*, Eccl. 9. 7. *and drink thy Wine*, nay, if thou should'st be reduc'd to that, Drink fair Water, *with a merry Heart*, if thou hast good ground to hope that in Christ Jesus, *God now accepteth thy Works*; And *this Joy of the Lord will be thy Strength*.

3. Let

3. Let us look with Contempt upon the Pleasures of Sense, and with Abhorrence upon the Pleasures of Sin. The more we have tasted of the Delights of Heaven, the more our Mouths should be put out of Taste to the Delights of this Earth. Let not those who have been feasted with the Milk and Honey of Canaan, hanker after the Garlick and Onions of Egypt.

Let us keep at a Distance from all forbidden Pleasures; There's a Hook under those Baits, a Snake under the green Grass; a Rock under those smooth Waters, on which Multitudes have split. We must so dread the Drunkard's Pleasure, as not to look upon the Wine when it is red, Prov. 23. 31. so dread the Pleasures of the Adulterer, as not to look upon a Woman to Lust after her, Mat. 5. 28. for these Pleasures of Sin not only are but for a Season, but at the last they bite like a Serpent, and sting like an Adder. Either Spiritual Pleasures will deaden the Force of the Pleasures of Sin, or the Pleasures of Sin will spoil the Relish of Spiritual Pleasures.

Let us keep up a holy Indifferency, even to the lawful Delights of Sense, and take heed of loving them more than God. The Eye that has look'd at the Sun is dazzled to every thing else; Have we beheld the Beauty of the Lord? Let us see and own, how little Beauty there is in other things. If we be tempted to do any thing unbecoming us, by the Allurements of Pleasure, we may well say, Offer these things to those that know no better; but we do, and will never leave Fountains of living Water, for Cisterns of puddle Water.

4. Let not our Hearts envy Sinners: Envy ariseth from an Opinion that the State of others is better than our own, which we grudge and are displeaseth at; and wish our selves in their Condition.

Good

Good People are often caution'd against this Sin; *Be not then envious against evil Men, nor desire to be with them*, Prov. 24. 1. Psal. 37. 1. for if there be all this Pleasure in Religion, and we have experienc'd it, surely we would not exchange Condition with any Sinner, even in his best Estate.

Envy not Sinners their *outward Prosperity*, their Wealth and Abundance, which puts them into a Capacity of having all the Delights of Sense, wound up to the Heights of *Pleasurableness*; Tho' they lye upon Beds of Ivory, Amos 6. 4, 5, 6. and stretch themselves upon their Couches, and eat the Lambs out of the Flocks, and the Calves out of the midst of the Stall, tho' they chant to the Sound of the Viol, drink Wine in Bowls, and anoint themselves with the chief Ointments; yet those have no Reason to envy them, whose Souls dwell at Ease in God, who are fed with the Bread of Life, the true Manna, Angels Food, and drink of the *Water of Life* freely, that make Melody with their Hearts to the Lord, and are made to hear from him Joy and Gladness; and have receiv'd the Anointing of the Spirit. If we have relish'd the Delights of Religion, we will say as David, *Let us not eat of their Dainties*, Psal. 141. 4.

Envy not Sinners the *Liberty* they take to sin; that they can allow themselves in the full Enjoyment of these Pleasures, which we cannot think of without Horror; but have not we then the Enjoyment of those Pleasures which are infinitely better, and which they are Strangers to? We cannot have both, and of the two, are not ours, without Dispute, preferable to theirs, and why then should we envy them? Their Pleasures are enslaving, ours enlarging; Theirs debasing to the Soul, ours ennobling; Theirs surfeiting, ours satisfying;

tisfying; Theirs *offensive* to God, ours *pleasing* to him; Theirs will *end in Pain* and Bitterness, ours will be *perfected in endless Joys*; And what Reason then have we to envy them?

5. *Let not our Spirits sink, or be dejected, under the Afflictions of this present Time.* We disparage our Comforts in God, if we lay too much to Heart our Crosses in the World; And therefore, hereby let us Evidence, that being satisfy'd of God's *loving Kindness*, we are satisfy'd with it. Let us look upon that as sufficient to balance all the *Unkindnesses* of Men. They that *value* themselves upon God's *Smiles*, ought not to *vex* themselves at the *World's Frowns*. The Light of God's Countenance can shine through the thickest Clouds of the Troubles of this present Time; and therefore, we should *walk in the Light of the Lord*, even then when as to our outward Condition we *sit in Darkness*.

We manifest that we have found true Delight and Satisfaction in the Service of God, and Communion with him, when the *Pleasure* of that will make the bitterest Cup of Affliction, that our Father puts into our Hand, not only *passable* but *pleasant*; so that like blessed Paul when we are *as sorrowful*, yet we may be *always rejoicing*, and may *take Pleasure in Infirmities and Reproaches*, because tho' for the present they are not joyous but grievous, yet when afterwards they yield the peaceable Fruit of Righteousness they become not *grievous*, but truly *joyous*. *Blessed is the Man whom thou chastenest.*

6. *Let the Pleasure we have found in Religion, dispose us to be liberal and charitable to the poor and distressed.* The pleasing Sense we have of God's Bounty to us, by which he has done so much to *make us easy*, should engage us bountifully to *distribute to the Necessities of Saints*, according to our Ability,

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Ability, not only to keep them from perishing, but to *make them easy*; and that they may rejoyce as well as we. Chearfulness that enlargeth the Heart, should open the Hand too. Paul observes it concerning the Churches of Macedonia, who were ready to give for the Relief of the poor Saints at Jerusalem, that it was the *Abundance of their Joy*, their spiritual Joy, their Joy in God, that *abounded unto the Riches of their Liberality*, 2 Cor. 8. 2.

When the People of Israel are commanded to *rejoice in every good thing*, which God had given them, Deut. 26. 11, 12. they are commanded also to give freely *to the Levite, the Stranger, the Fatherless, and the Widow, that they may eat, and be filled*. And when upon a particular Occasion they are directed to *eat the Fat, and drink the Sweet*, Neh. 8. 10. at the same time they are directed to *send Portions to them, for whom nothing is prepar'd*; And then the Joy of the Lord will be their Strength. By our being *charitable* we should show that we are *cheerful*; that we cheerfully *taste* God's Goodness in what we have, and *trust* his Goodness for what we may hereafter want.

7. Let us *do what we can, to bring others to partake of the same Pleasures in Religion that we have tasted, especially those that are under our Charge*. It adds very much to the Pleasure of an Enjoyment, to communicate of it to others, especially when the Nature of it is such, that we have never the less, but the more rather, for others *sharing* in it. What good Tidings we hear that are of common Concern, we desire that others may hear them, and be glad too. He that has but found a lost Sheep, *calls his Friends and Neighbours to rejoyce with him*, Luke 15. 6. much more he that has found Christ, and found Comfort in him; who can say, *Not only come and rejoyce with me, but come and*

partake with me; for yet there is Room enough for all, tho' never so numerous, enough for each, tho' never so necessitous and craving.

When Sampson had found Honey in the Carcass of the Lion, *Judg. 14. 8.* he brought some of it to *his Parents*, that they might partake with him; Thus when we have found a *Day in God's Courts better than a thousand*, we should invite others into those Courts, by telling them *what God has done for our Souls*, *Psal. 66. 16.* and how willing he is to do the same for theirs, if they in like manner apply themselves to him. When *Andrew* with a surprizing Pleasure had found the *Messiah*, *John 1. 41, 45.* he cannot rest till he has brought his Brother *Peter* to him; nor *Philip* till he hath brought his Friend *Nathaniel*. They that are feasted with the Comforts of God's House, should not covet to *eat their Morsel alone*; but be willing to *communicate* of their spiritual Things.

8. Let us be willing to dye, and leave this World. We have Reason to be ashamed of our selves, that we who have not only *laid up our Treasure* above, but *fetch our Pleasures* thence, yet are as much in Love with our present State, and as loth to think of quitting it, as if our Treasure and Pleasure, and All were wrapt up in the Things of Sense and Time. The Delights of Sense entangle us, and hold us here; *These are the Things that make us loth to dye*, as one once said, viewing his fine House and Gardens. And are these Things sufficient to *court our stay* here, when God calls to *Arise, and Depart, for this is not our Rest*, *Mic. 2. 10.*

Let us not be afraid to remove from a *World of Sense* to a *World of Spirits*, since we have found the *Pleasures of Sense* not worthy to be compar'd with *Spiritual Pleasures*. When in *Old Age*, which is one of the *Vallies of the Shadow of Death*, we can no longer relish the Delights of the Body,

but they become *sapless and tasteless*, as they were to Barzillai, yet we need not call those *Evil Days*, and *Tears*, in which we have no Pleasure, if we have walk'd, and persever'd in Wisdom's Ways; for if so, we may then in Old Age, look back with Pleasure upon a Life well spent on Earth, as Hezekiah did, and look forward with more Pleasure, upon a Life to be better spent in Heaven.

And when we have received a Sentence of Death within our selves, and see the Day approaching, the Pleasure we have in loving God, and believing in Christ, and in the Expressions of Holy Joy and Thankfulness, should make even a sick Bed and a Death Bed easy; the Saints shall be joyful in Glory, and shall sing aloud upon their Beds, Psal. 149: 5. those Beds to which they are confin'd, and from which they are removing to their Graves, their Beds in the Darknes. Our Religion, if we be faithful to it, will furnish us with living Comforts, in dying Moments, sufficient to balance the Pains of Death, and take off the Terror of it; and to enable us to triumph over it, O Death where is thy Sting? Let us then evidence our Experiences of the Pleasures of Religion, by living above the inordinate Love of Life and Fear of Death.

Lastly, Let us long for the Perfection of these Spiritual Pleasures in the Kingdom of Glory. When we come thither, and not 'till then, they will be perfected; while we are here, as we know and love but in part, so we rejoyce but in part, even our Spiritual Joys here have their Damps and Allays; we mix Tears and Tremblings with them: But in Heaven, there is a Fulness of Joy without Mixture, and Pleasures for evermore without Period or Diminution. Christ's Servants will there enter into the Joy of their Lord, and it shall be Everlasting Joy, Isa. 35. 10.

And what are the Pleasures in the *Way of Wisdom* compar'd with those at the *End of the Way*? If a Complacency in the Divine Beauty and Love be so pleasant while we are *in the Body*, and are *absent from the Lord*, what will it be when we have put off the Body, and go to be *present with the Lord*? If a Day in God's Courts, and a few Minutes spent there in his Praises be so pleasant, what will an Eternity within the Vail be, among them that *dwell in his House* above, and are *still praising him*? If the *Earnest of our Inheritance* be so comfortable, that will the Inheritance it self be?

Now wherever there is Grace, it will be aiming at, and pressing towards its own Perfection; 'Tis a *Well of Water springing up to Eternal Life*, John 4. 14. This therefore we should be *longing for*. Our Love to God in this World is *Love in Motion*, in Heaven 'twill be *Love at Rest*: O when shall that *Sabbatism* come, which *remains for the People of God*! Here we have the Pleasure of looking towards God, O when shall we come, and appear before him! Our Lord Jesus, when at his Last Passover, which he earnestly desir'd to eat with his Disciples, he had drunk of the *Fruit of the Vine*, he speaks as one that long'd to *drink it New in the Kingdom of his Father*, Mat. 26. 29. 'Tis very pleasant to serve Christ here, but to *depart and to be with Christ is far better*. Now are we the *Sons of God*, 1 John 3. 2. and 'tis very pleasant to think of that; But it doth not yet appear what we shall be; Something there is in reserve, which we are kept in Expectation of; We are not yet at Home, but should long to be there, and keek up holy Desires of that *Glory to be reveal'd*, that we may be quickened as long as we are here to press towards the Mark for the Prize of the High Calling.

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